

Angeliki Voela

Euripides' Ion: A Psychoanalytic Reading

PhD Thesis

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

1997



DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I declare that this thesis is my own original work unless otherwise attributed.

ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a reading of a Classical Greek play, the "Ion" of Euripides, in terms of the psychoanalytic theories of S. Freud and J. Lacan. There are four chapters, each dealing with a particular aspect, or group of related aspects, of the play. Each chapter offers an exposition of the relevant psychoanalytic concepts, followed by an application of them to a particular aspect, or aspects, of the play.

Chapter one introduces some basic Freudian and Lacanian concepts. The Freudian aspects are: the Oedipus complex, repression and the unconscious. The Lacanian concepts are: the signifier and the signified in his theory, metonymy and metaphor in relation to desire, Lacan's view of the unconscious, and the function of the phallus in the economy of desire. In the light of these notions a psychoanalytic reading is offered of Ion's monody and his interview with Creusa.

Chapter two begins with a discussion of the notion of the ego in Freud and Lacan and the notion of the Imaginary in the latter. Lacan's paradigmatic reading of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter" then sets the scene for a structuralist overview of the play as presenting the child Ion as a piece of news addressed 'to whom it may concern'. These theoretical considerations are then brought to bear upon two matching developments in the play; Xuthus' acknowledgement of Ion as his son and the response to this challenge by his wife Creusa and her old servant. It is argued that both pairs are impelled by a unique opportunity to satisfy a desire and by a need to conceal their aims and their success from the other pair. The desire of the 'minor' characters is also discussed. It is argued that Xuthus, the old servant and the chorus all harbour impossible desires, the impossibility of which they pass on to Ion and Creusa.

The third chapter examines certain turning points in the play; a) Creusa and Ion's second meeting; it is argued that their symmetrically inverted positions re-pose the question of death and castration; b) The Pythia's intervention; its language reinstates the paternal prohibition, and proposes a solution resembling repression; c) Ion's moment of indecision before Creusa's recognition of him; this represents the introjection of the name of the father; d) the happy encounter and the complication of Ion's disbelief in his mother's story; it is argued that the re-surfacing of doubt threatens to freeze the play into a new form of *aporia* and stagnation akin to the subject's inability to assume the other's desire; e) Athena's intervention; it is argued that Athena's success depends on the efficient projection of all evidence into the future.

Chapter four is devoted to Creusa's earlier monologue spoken in the presence of the old servant and the chorus. I outline the function of speech in analysis, the manifestation of neurotic desire in relation to the Other and the structure of the phantasy (*sic; technical term*) as a blending of conscious and unconscious elements. Creusa's monologue is then examined in successive readings, each placing in the foreground a particular psychoanalytic aspect of it. The main aim of this chapter is to view the monologue as exemplifying the question 'what is my desire?' in relation to the Other's desire.

The general conclusion of this thesis is that Euripides' play embodies Lacan's teaching that *one must learn not to throw oneself into the void*, in this case into the despair of *aporia*, or lack of means. A gradual realignment of desire, an education and humanisation of that desire, starts from a zero point of absolute ignorance, proceeds *via* the subject's apprenticeship in the Imaginary, reaches the peak of aggressive disintegration on confrontation with a mirror image, and is renewed by the re-establishment of appropriate language and symbolism. Success depends on adaptation, on the subject's ability to integrate form and desire, on averting one's eyes from a perfect transparent truth, on recourse to appearances, on letting 'nothing' and 'the obvious' coexist and inter-play.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER 1.....	17
PART 1 THEORY: FREUD AND LACAN	17
FREUD: SOME ASPECTS OF THEORY THROUGH THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX	17
<i>The Oedipus Complex</i>	19
<i>Repression</i>	24
<i>The unconscious: a very short introduction</i>	27
LACAN: LANGUAGE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS.....	30
<i>The signifier in Linguistics and in Psychoanalysis</i>	30
<i>The Lacanian Subject</i>	33
<i>The Quilting point and the retroactive effect of meaning</i>	35
<i>The Paternal Metaphor</i>	38
<i>Phallus and Desire</i>	43
<i>Metonymy, metaphor: an example of the manifestation of desire</i>	45
PART 2 SCENE ONE: A BEGINNING	51
ION'S MORNING SONG AND THE FIRST MEETING WITH CREUSA.....	52
<i>Self introduction</i>	52
<i>Interpersonal relations</i>	59
<i>Failure of communication</i>	65
DISCUSSION: AN EXPLORATION OF THE OTHER'S DESIRE.....	70
CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SUMMARY	81
CHAPTER 2.....	84
PART 1 THEORY	84
FREUD: THE INSTINCT AND ITS VICISSITUDES	84
<i>Sadism-masochism, love-hate the death instinct</i>	85
THE IMAGINARY	92
<i>The Mirror Stage, the Ego, Aggressivity and Alienation</i>	92
<i>The optical schema; the investment of the Image with Libido</i>	98
<i>Desire, Identification, and the Ego in Analysis</i>	101
TWO INFLUENCES	104
<i>The Purloined Letter</i>	104

<i>A Structuralist Influence</i>	107
PART 2 TOWARDS THE IMAGINARY	119
FATHER AND SON: A NEW BEGINNING.....	121
<i>Two myths for Ion</i>	122
<i>Motherless birth</i>	123
<i>The father of guilt</i>	125
<i>Inventing memory</i>	127
<i>Xuthus' Desire</i>	134
ANOTHER BEGINNING?	138
<i>The Chorus as Mirror</i>	140
<i>The old servant: desire and function</i>	143
<i>Creusa and the servant:</i>	147
CONCLUDING REMARKS	152
CHAPTER 3	159
ION'S DESIRE	159
THE ALTAR SCENE : SPECULAR DUALITY	167
THE PYTHIA'S INTERVENTION	173
WHAT TO DO WITH ONE'S DESIRE	178
RECOGNITION	181
DOUBT, AND SILENCE OR WHY APOLLO MUST NOT SPEAK	183
CHAPTER 4	200
CREUSA'S DESIRE: REPRESENTING FEAR	200
CREUSA'S MONOLOGUE	200
LOOKING FROM AFAR	211
CONCLUSION	229
TOWARDS PERSPECTIVE.....	247
BIBLIOGRAPHY	252

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Gordon J Howie, Department of Classics, and Graham D Martin, Department of French, for their help and guidance throughout my research. Dr Kathreen Swarbrick, Department of French, for our discussions on Lacan, Andrea Hulme for all her support and proof-reading of part of this thesis. Christopher Strahan, Department of Classics, for his useful comments on Greek Drama. Dr Karin McPherson, German Department, for her friendship and moral support. Elaine Hutchinson, secretary at the Department of Classics, for all her help.

I would also like to thank my parents for their financial support and encouragement, my sister Olga for believing in me, Leda Vlachou for our endless discussions on Lacan and Greek Drama and Prodromos Sarigianis for everything.

INTRODUCTION

"Classics, almost by definition, are works of art which frame human experience in enduring and universally meaningful form. If, to render their meaning fruitful for our time, we resort to contemporary conceptualisations of experience, we do only what every age has done and must do with great works of the past: translate them into our own language". These are the words of C. Segal in 1968 in the first volume of *Arethusa* [Segal 1968, p. 7] that proclaim Classics open to modern interpretations.

In 1993 Segal's article "Euripides' *Alceste*: How to die a normal death in Greek drama" appears in a book called "Death and Representation" amongst articles discussing various theories and various examples, encompassing ancient and Victorian literature, painting and photography and a bibliography spanning from Adorno to Žižek.

The psychoanalytic perspective is encapsulated in the terms *desire* and *speech*. Desire is born with the subject. It comes from within. It maintains our interest in the world. It shapes our preferences, feeds our intellectual curiosity or indifference, supports our relations, circumscribes our ambitions. By definition it is inexhaustible and essentially unsatisfiable. It refracts into many 'desires to' and even if they could all be perfectly satisfied desire would not be exhausted.

Speech is the medium of analysis. We are saying *speech* and not *language* in order to emphasise the actuality and immediacy of the produced word. Language is 'the system', our common referent. It is governed by rules that permit certain combinations and exclude others. Speech is an instance, a particular combination, compared to the total.

The close relation of language and society is also important. Both are rule governed systems. We use language to define and describe the social relations and it is in terms of language and the set relations that we perceive ourselves with a certain degree of stability. We live in a community and we are not one but many: children of certain parents, women, men, colleagues, professionals, team members and so on. We

maintain complex relations which are constantly redefined. We speak, we ask, we demand, we give and we take. We are satisfied or dissatisfied. We change every time we utter a new word. Still, we have a fairly concrete idea of who we are. We have *a name*, a sense of identity and of what we want. We command a considerable amount of memories and reasonable choices that we can defend if necessary. We have a will of our own and we sometimes like to impose it on other people.

Psychoanalysis is interested in desire and its expression. Desire resides in the unconscious and if we can afford to oversimplify it for a while we can see it as a force that is structured in the unconscious, powers our being from within and derives some satisfaction from all our activities. The unconscious is not an occult, dark-side-of-the-moon aspect of self. It is another organised system just like language and society. In its basic form it originates in *a representation* of the basic laws of society and language. Consider, for instance, the Oedipus complex. It represents the permissible kinship and social combinations by setting the limits at incest and parricide. Every time a new member is born into language and into society it receives its place with reference to those predefined terms and the mother and the father. Desire is therefore closely related to a definitive loss- the return to or union with the mother- and to a gain, the infinite variety of ways to evoke it and compensate for it from within an organised system.

Our psychoanalytic approach relies on Freud and Lacan. Freud developed the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis. He developed a system of agencies (ego, id, super-ego) and accounted for their relations. He was interested in describing as adequately as possible the genesis and development of human sexuality which he considered determinant of the psychological development of the individual. Freud devised an intricate psychoanalytic terminology (examples are: the Oedipus complex, the unconscious, sadism, masochism, neurosis etc.). Some of the terms have found their way into everyday language, often hugely misinterpreted and misunderstood. Within the field of psychoanalysis different analysts have interpreted Freud in different ways, depending on the component they chose to emphasise. Some of them 'parted ways' with Freud. Others have claimed to have 'returned' to Freud and to have restored proper meaning to his writings. One of them is J Lacan who, in the thirties,

'returns' to Freud by bringing the psychoanalytic field in contact with the principles of another science, Linguistics, and the approach dominating Humanistic Sciences at that time, Structuralism. A new perspective and a new terminology is born. For instance, Lacan speaks of the Symbolic and the Imaginary (to be read as nouns *not* as adjectives)¹, respectively the field of the organised social and linguistic relations and the field of passions and emotions with which the bare structures of the Symbolic are invested.

From very early Lacan and Freud found their way into Literary Criticism. Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism² applies the principles and methods of psychoanalysis to the literary text. Psychoanalysis and literature have *speech* in common. The analysand's utterances are speech in relation to Language, the text is speech in relation to Literature. One thing, must be stressed however: psychoanalysis deals with patients, 'real' people seeking cure. Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism does not deal with 'patients' in the sense that it does not seek to cure. It seeks to advance our understanding of literature. By applying Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism to a text we are not trying to violate 'literature' by foisting diagnoses on it, we are seeking entry into its world. We rely on the spoken word and we respect the formal boundaries of the text. We are not trying to bring something new into literature itself but into the study of literature.

All schools of Literary Criticism have something in common: the objectivity characteristic of Science. Literature excites emotional responses but the study of literature should not succumb to that. To deal with emotion does not necessarily mean to respond with emotion and to communicate an emotional approach, especially under the label of 'criticism' or 'analysis'. The Classical text, tragedy in particular, merits objective analysis as much as any other genre. The case of psychoanalytic literary criticism and tragedy, however, is slightly complicated. Ridden with strict definitions of how to respond to tragedy and what one ought to feel, the emotional approach

¹ I use capital letters for the *Imaginary* and the *Symbolic* when referring to them as fields in general. Lower case is used when they are adjectives.

² For a brief introduction to Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism, see: Jefferson and Robey [1986, chapter 6]. A comprehensive and useful guide to the main trends of psychoanalytic literary criticism is Ellman's [1994] collection of essays; also useful: Wright [1984, chapter 7 in particular].

appears to have been the dominant approach for centuries. Freud's 'unfortunate' appropriation of the 'Oedipus Rex' for expository purposes has caused indignation³, and a feeling of general hostility towards psychoanalysis led André Green [1979, p. 20] in the late seventies to the following polemic statement: "Who abuses cultural products most: he who seeks in them for a new vision that he supposes them to be still capable of producing, despite the accumulation of readings already in existence, or he who dispenses with radical questioning and brings to the works a mere paraphrastic commentary saturated with the presuppositions of common knowledge?".

Before defining the directions and the particular purposes of the present psychoanalytic reading I wish to say that my latent intention is to show what a psychoanalytic reading is in general and how it emerges from the free interaction of the theory and the text. We are not dealing with a powerful theory and a powerless text. According to my experience they are equal and their equality shows itself in every respect. Green makes a similar point [1979, p. 25]: "No doubt there is a risk- and adventurous hermeneuts have often been criticised for just this- that one may shape the work into a lock (or discover a lock in it) to fit one's own particular key. The objection need not be taken seriously. A work only allows itself to take the form of a lock if it can be so taken- if its material permits it to do so and if its form suggests it. The important thing is not that one should be able to insert a key, but that one should know what would be revealed by the door that one hopes to open".

Chapter One is divided into two parts, theory and application. The theory part covers essential psychoanalytic notions first in Freud and then in Lacan. We apply some of these notions to the first scene, and in particular to Ion's monologue and the first meeting between him and Creusa. The theory part is considerably wider in scope than

³ I am speaking about Vernant's "Oedipus without a complex" [1967]. Vernant's criticism is well articulated and valid. Indeed, one does not necessarily need to resort to psychoanalysis in order to read 'Oedipus Rex'. Sociology can do as an alternative point of view. What I find difficult to understand, however, is Vernant's refusal to acknowledge psychoanalysis as another point of view, equally valid or, even from the most conservative classicists' point of view, equally 'alien' to Ancient Drama. Otherwise, Vernant's style of writing and vocabulary shows that he is very familiar with the progress of analysis and structuralism in France at the time he is writing.

is necessary for a psychoanalytic reading of the first scene. This is because it is also a general introduction to Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis and the basis for further extensions in the following chapters. After a very general sketching of the components of the Freudian theory we introduce the Oedipus complex, the major structural change in the child's psychological constitution. We also introduce its effect on the pre-existing structure (narcissism) and the results of their interaction (super-ego and ideal-ego). The mechanism of Repression and a very brief presentation of the properties of the Unconscious follow. We will be using the terms 'repression' a great deal in this thesis. Apart from its significance in the formation of the Unconscious it is also the mechanism responsible for the flawless functioning of the psychical operations and its failure (return of the repressed) is the general term for 'trouble' or discomfort in the system.

Against the background of the Freudian notions and presentation of the linguistic *Sign* (Signifier and Signified) we introduce some of Lacan's key psychoanalytic concepts. We define Lacan's interest in the Subject of the Unconscious, drawing a parallel between him and Freud. We define Lacan's approach to language by explaining his similarities to and differences from Saussure, one of the Linguists he draws on.

For Lacan, figurative language is more revealing than ordinary communicative language. In fact the figures of speech 'metonymy' and 'metaphor' play an important role in his theory because of their evocative power. Metaphor is incorporated into the formation and dissolution of the Oedipus complex, which now becomes 'the Paternal metaphor' (or Name of the Father). And because metonymy and metaphor participate in the structure of the unconscious they also allow access to it in language. We discuss the Lacanian version of the Unconscious and the function of the phallus in its economy. We introduce 'desire' in Lacan and we close the theory part with a discussion of the function and importance of the two figures of speech, metonymy and metaphor, in theory and in practice. For the latter we present a Lacanian analysis of one of Freud's dreams.

For the psychoanalytic reading of the play we follow the basic linguistic properties that govern a sentence: combination and selection. Thus, we read the scenes of the play as a succession of terms that combine and contribute equally to the meaning of the play. We pay particular attention to two monologues, Ion's introductory

monologue in the first scene, and Creusa's monologue in the third scene, both of which afford a valuable insight into the nature of those two characters.

In Chapter One we present Ion's monologue and the first meeting with Creusa along the lines of repression and the return of the repressed. We argue that Ion's morning song is not a simple celebration of Apollo and purity but reveals Ion's mixed feelings to the god and his own attitude to sexuality. We also argue that it is due to their attitude towards Apollo and sexuality that Ion and Creusa like each other in the beginning and treat each other with suspicion in the end. Discussing our findings from a Lacanian perspective we set out the main reasons and the main lines of their ensuing enmity. From a psychoanalytic point of view the future of the play is prepared right here, before Apollo's oracle. It emerges from the renewal of old fears and unacknowledged convictions which Ion and Creusa cannot see in themselves but can successfully bring out in each other. We will consider the play as a series of attempted beginnings, their initial encounter being the first of these. Each new beginning tries to erase the previous one, allay their fears and resolve their problems. Each beginning is doomed so long as it fails to consider the problems raised in the first scene, Apollo's aggressive sexuality, his obligations and the fate of his child.

In Chapter Two we discuss Lacan's Imaginary in detail. Again we begin with Freud, adding more to the picture of the theory by referring to the progress of sexuality from pre-genital to genital maturity and introducing the death instinct in the psychical economy. Turning to Lacan, we present the Imaginary, the compound field of the ego, the senses and identifications. The presentation has three aspects. The first introduces the genesis of the ego and two related notions, alienation and aggressivity. The second presents the Imaginary from within Lacan's allegory of the optical schema, the physics experiment he uses in order to illustrate the properties of the Imaginary and in particular the dependence of human sexuality on vision. The third aspect examines the interaction of the Imaginary and the Symbolic; first, the relation of desire to love (and falling in love), and the three different modes of identification with another person; second, the exploration of the Imaginary through language (Symbolic) in analysis. An extensive reference to Lacan's reading of Poe's 'The Purloined Letter' and a structuralist presentation of the successive stages of the plot provide the link between abstract theory and application.

Using the theory of the Imaginary I discuss Scenes Two and Three together, in order to show that the study of the two pairs, Xuthus and Ion on one side and Creusa and her friends on the other, offers a wealth of insights into 'human affairs'. We discuss the relationship of the two members of each pair and of the two camps to each other. We maintain the position that they are mirror-reflections of each other. At the risk of appearing to abandon my earlier position on the equality of all components, I would say that Scenes Two and Three are the most precious from a psychoanalytic point of view because they expose all the misunderstandings and all the possible errors that conventional logic and emotion can produce despite conforming to the rules of logic. For that reason, I would draw the reader's attention to all the latent comparisons, parallels and copying between positions and roles that are familiar in the genre. They, together with the fact that each side thinks and reacts with the other in mind, contribute to a general symmetry between the two scenes. The reason I draw attention to these features in the introduction is because I wish to make a point about the psychoanalytic approach. Looking into Scenes Two and Three we are not trying to locate 'culprits' or to blame anyone. We are trying to unearth the meaning of what is said in relation to desire and to throw some light on the omnipotence of desire that seeks a way to satisfaction ignoring conventions. In Two and Three, there are some poignant moments where hierarchies and powers seem to be demolished and reconstituted at the whim of a king who fancies himself to be the father of an ex-servant or a slave who imagines himself to be the next saviour of Athens. Responding emotionally to Xuthus, Creusa, Ion or the old servant might end in 'I am better' or 'I am worse' or 'I have nothing to do with them' but goes no further than comparisons or taking sides- duplicating, more or less what they do. Recognising the similarities of their behaviour and postponing taking sides, might just be revealing of human ways in general, as it affords a glimpse into the perfect mechanisms of the Imaginary and the Symbolic in which we are implicated despite our best efforts to 'outwit' them.

In terms of action Scenes Two and Three constitute new beginnings, interpretations of the divine oracle affected by the unresolved issues of the early encounter (Scene One). From a psychoanalytic point of view, what makes them *wrong beginnings* is not so much their reasoning as the fact that with them, both camps seek to erase a previous

bad start at the other's expense thus eternally reproducing the sterile *love your friends and hate your enemies* when in need for 'good arguments'.

Chapters Three and Four are twin chapters. They explore the avalanche of changes starting with Creusa and Ion's second meeting and the consequences of Athena's intervention. They explore the Imaginary and the Symbolic from a different aspect, due to the fact that Creusa and Ion now confront each other. There are two psychoanalytical notions in the background. They are both related to the *here and now* of the psychoanalytic experience that runs parallel to the *here and now* of the confrontation. Analysis is devoted to the verbal reconstitution of the subject's history with a view to conferring meaning on 'grey areas' and previously repressed events. This opens the road to the cure. Part of the process is completed when the analysand has explored all the (imaginary) influences in his life, persons and events. According to Lacan, the next step is taken when a contradiction or meaninglessness emerges in the account of personal history. Conferring meaning on that is a major turning point and can only be reached when all 'excuses' and alternatives are abandoned. This is also one of the few occasions that the analyst can intervene in a fruitful and helpful way. The outcome of analysis and the return of the individual to society is finally sealed by tying up the 'conclusions' of the experience to a form of the Oedipus complex, since it represents a major rule of integration into society.

In our play the fruitful moment of contradiction and meaninglessness is the moment when Creusa and Ion meet for the second time and between themselves exhaust all their arguments about being right and protecting one's own rights. It is then and only then that two interventions mark the end of the adventure. The first one, by the Pythia, marks a new beginning, this time closer to the begging of life-lying-next-to-death. The second, by Athena, completes the previous one. We argue that they are both accepted only in so far as they make sense to Creusa and Ion by meeting particular desires but *not* in an imaginary way. In order to prove our point we examine Ion's final doubt about Apollo's truthfulness in the second half of the third chapter and, in chapter four, Creusa's monologue and her withdrawal from the scene after planning Ion's murder. For the theoretical support of our arguments we turn to Lacan's seminar on 'The Psychoses' in which he explains the symbolic significance of the Name of the Father (a notion we introduce in the first chapter) with particular emphasis on the function of

procreation (being a father in this case) and the assumption of a 'mandate', a symbolic 'mission' conferred upon the child by the father. Along these lines, we argue that Ion accepts Athena's settlement so long as he has previously articulated his doubt and his lack of any form of recognition by his real father. Athena confers meaning on Ion's future by prophesying his taking the role of the responsible father of four nations, and by showing Apollo to be more 'human' for Ion's liking.

In Creusa's case, the examination of the monologue gradually leads us to the figure of her father, Erechtheus, whom she both loves and fears. Examining the vocabulary of the monologue and the meaning of her withdrawal from the murder scene after the servant has taken her place, leads us to the conclusion that Creusa, literally and metaphorically, avoids the eyes of her father. We argue that Athena addresses this particular fear thus making it easy for Creusa to forgive Apollo in the end.

In the title of the thesis the word *reading* of the play appears. I have chosen this word instead of *interpretation* in order to stress the significance of the *process* (of reading) and to juxtapose it to *the result*, if the latter is to be considered as *the main point* of the thesis. If I were asked to specify that main point I would choose to focus on the particularity, the meaningfulness and the eagerness of the reception of Athena's intervention by Creusa and Ion at the end of the play. It is the result of the process, a long journey in which they learn to speak first of all and to express, albeit imperfectly, their worries and fears. It is the result of a narrowing down of the causes of anxiety to the figure of the Father and his symbolic function in their integration in society; it is the result of mortals' having demanded it that gods appear.

With the word *reading* I also wish to emphasise the fact that I focus on the text only. This is a textual approach. It extends from the beginning to the end of the text and addresses all issues within these limits and with the tools provided by the text itself. We will therefore forego three privileges usually associated with the genre: the poet, the myth and the spectator. We will not be looking for Euripides or for possible intentions when he was composing *Ion*. The structure speaks for itself and the interplay of blindness and insight that invites us to an intellectual game of using in

analysis the principles put forward by the text suggest a subtle poet, alert to the games of appearances and (hidden) realities⁴.

Myth and the spectator have often 'claimed' the text. It always 'returns' to a larger corpus of myths from which it has initially sprung, or, it is addressed to an audience which is the ultimate receiver of the cultural product⁵. I do not think that such 'appropriations' advance the cause of the modern understanding of Ancient Greek drama. Like the child-Ion in our play, a text is addressed *to whom it may concern*. To monopolise it, to remove it from the current discourse in the name of a Classical orthodoxy is wrong and, at the end of the day, meaningless.

By *reading*, finally, I wish to draw the reader's attention to the complexity of the process itself. When we read we link the material to other writings and other information. We rely on previous knowledge which comes to support our understanding as we go along rather than to impede and halt it. The wider our background knowledge is, the better. The greater our awareness and sensitivity of cultural and social issues is, the better. Still, the text is our guide. We let all the other

⁴ Although I have excluded the poet from my reading I cannot resist the temptation to mention Winnington-Ingram's [1969] article: "Euripides: *poietes sophos*" as a tribute to an author that in the eyes of the modern reader produced a piece of work for/of pleasure. There he is portrayed as sophisticated, radical in his treatment of old themes, in the intellectual avant-garde, someone who could not resist the temptation to amuse himself and his fellow-intellectuals (p. 132). He responds to the demands of his audience: they want *το σαφές* (lucidity) and *το σοφόν* (cleverness) (p. 136) and he gives them intrigues, unexpected turns, suspense, (optical) illusions and the *deus ex machina*.

⁵ In 'The children of Athena' Loraux [1984] starts her chapter on "Autochthonous Kreousa: Euripides *Ion*" with the following statement: "Athens is the sole subject of Euripides' *Ion*, the Acropolis its sole hero. Its catalyst is a woman called Kreousa and its topic is the specifically tragic discourse of autochthony" (p. 184). I do recognise the metaphorical trend in this opening statement. I do agree that *Ion* has a strong mythical component. I disagree with the word 'sole'.

In the 'Tragic effect' Green [1979] gives a sophisticated introduction to the spectacle-spectator relationship and to the treatment of the myth(s) from a psychoanalytic perspective. I refer to the introduction (pp. 1- 34) and the Epilogue: Oedipus, myth or truth (pp. 186-244). It is essential reading and an exemplary piece of work on the psychoanalytic approach of both.

issues reverberate between the lines. Psychoanalysis requires and presupposes this wide understanding⁶.

I will conclude this short introduction by quoting a few lines from Kristeva's [1979, p. 211]⁷ "Giotto's Joy". It encompasses the writer of a piece of research, the work and its author and the reader: "My choice, my desire to speak of Giotto (1267-1336) - if justification be needed - relates to his experiments in architecture and colour... as much as to his place within the history of Western painting". Everything begins with the researcher's desire that is attached to a particular work of art- who knows why?

⁶ We accept that tragedy explores the grey areas of self-definition and, bringing the general to the particular, we are trying to specify how this is achieved in our case. We accept the polarised antitheses of the male and the female [e.g. Zeitlin 1978], the inferior place of women in antiquity [e.g. Just 1989], the practice of infant exposure, the network of the in-side and the out-side formed in terms of the city [e.g. Goldhill 1986] and in terms of the mind [e.g. Padel 1992], the marked difference of the mortals and the immortals [e.g. Vernant 1991] etc.

We will be referring to some cultural, mythical and social aspects during the analysis.

For the cultural awareness of the analyst, Lacan often draws his audience's attention to the importance of reading literature, being in touch with the changes of the living language, maintaining an interest in culture in general. A typical example of the degree in which cultural sensitivity affects the psychoanalytic understanding is given by Lacan in the Seminar on Freud. It is on a case as different from our Western culture experience as the twelve Olympians and concerns the Koranic law. Lacan's patient exhibited a variety of symptoms related to the use of the hand. Reference to the analysand's childhood related them to early sexual activity but it neither explained nor resolved anything [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 196]. Only when the analyst observed that the analysand was of the Islamic religion and manifested a considerable "aversion to the Koranic law" (ibid) was he able to put things into perspective. The Koran dictates the punishment of the guilty by cutting off their hand. That aspect was incorporated in the personal problem and contributed to giving it an expression. The Koranic law was a strong component of this man's cultural heritage and had been used in a very special way. Access to the truth of the analysand's symptoms would never have been achieved had the analyst been unaware of the characteristics of the Islamic culture.

⁷ Kristeva does not conduct 'psychoanalytic literary criticism' (not the Lacanian version anyway and her affinities with the particular school are not within our interests). In early books she brings together Freud and structuralism/semiotics. She has been a great influence on my studies though she is not clearly represented in the present one. I simply appropriate the particular statement for expository reasons- perhaps because of the wonderful word 'joy'.

Desire does not need justification, we all know that by virtue of being 'desiring subjects'. Desire is simultaneous with language: it desires to speak. As speech addressed to 'whom it may concern' it must carry some easily recognisable form and persuasion: it must give some reasons for the particular choice and must use language to deliver it. These reasons do not cover the initial desire completely but they do not betray it completely either. The interest in the particular work is accounted for in terms of originality and historic prominence, thus promising an interesting (communicable) reading beyond the personal interest of the researcher. 'Giotto's joy' transposes 'desire' into the text. It becomes someone else's desire which now seeks expression- in forms and colours. It lends itself to pleasure, not to pathology, to joy, as it is a joy to read, to the artist's expression as *expression of desire*.

Desire finds its way in other people's desires, in different modes of expression (painting, poetry etc.) and in 'objects' of different times; how it communicates its promises and its lures, defines its aims and returns its due to its participants. Let us look at psychoanalytic literary criticism from this perspective, as a multilayered act of communication, in which we are trying to access what the text 'tries to say' and looking for it in the same place as desire 'occurs', in speech. We do not know what we will find but we look for it with an all too familiar certainty: that desire, one way or another, *must be expressed*.

CHAPTER 1

PART 1 THEORY: FREUD AND LACAN

FREUD: SOME ASPECTS OF THEORY THROUGH THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX

A lot has been said and written about Freud (1856-1938). The doctor from Vienna was not the first one to speak about human sexuality but he certainly took some bold steps in the direction of sexuality in childhood and the exploration of the Unconscious.

Freud's impact on twentieth century thought has been enormous. Many decades later, when Freud's theory has been successfully destroyed and reconstituted many times and from many different perspectives, the 'Oedipus complex' and the 'Unconscious' still remain the by-words of the analytic field. In the thirties, in France, J Lacan (1901-81) the "psychoanalyst and influential thinker"⁸ brought Freudian analysis in touch with linguistics in powerful writings of great insight and amazingly complex language. Many call it 'Return to Freud'. Controversial, and no less exposed to attacks, Lacan's version of Freud is equally influential in modern thought.

Reading Freud, and avoiding reading *about* Freud, one gradually becomes familiar with his style of psychoanalytic writing. Freud has a certain way of exposing his case, pointing out the weak and the strong points in his hypothesis, making suggestions and concluding; the Freudian text is disciplined. Reading Lacan is an altogether different experience. It takes a lot longer to get used to his style and to familiarise oneself with terms he does not very often define. Lacan is dialogic and discursive. Many of the texts are transcripts from lectures and seminars, spoken commentaries inspired by the requirements of the conversation rather than by the rules of written language.

⁸ From the back cover of Lemaire's book on Lacan.

In order to introduce Lacan's theory we will introduce the main aspects of Freud's. In this chapter we will start with a brief introduction of some key concepts: *the Oedipus complex* and its role in sexual development, the notion of *Repression* and the *Unconscious*.

Freud put together a comprehensive psychoanalytic theory of sexuality. His theory was based on observations of patients he was treating and was always revised with practice in mind.

In general terms, sexuality is born very early in life, initially as part of the life-preserving functions (feeding for instance). It gradually separates itself from that component and later becomes totally independent. Freud assumes the existence of instincts, forces or energies known only via their subjection to specific purposes. Thus he speaks of life-preservative and sexual instincts. Because he is not interested in the biological preservation of the individual or the species but in the "psyche" he focuses on what enters that domain only. Thus he is interested in sexuality not in its biological but in its psychological sense⁹.

In Freud the "psyche" is an apparatus of functions and agencies rather than a concept. Freud never uses the term. He speaks instead of the *ego*, the *id* and the *superego*

⁹ In "Life and death in psychoanalysis" Laplanche describes the 'genesis' of sexuality. Human sexuality emerges from the vital order, that is, from the non sexual self preservative condition according to a simple mechanism of 'propping'. The (sexual) instinct 'props' itself upon another function in order to be satisfied. It begins its life through the aim, object and source of another function and it later acquires its autonomy: "Now the crucial point is that simultaneous with the feeding function's achievement of satisfaction in nourishment, a sexual process begins to appear. Parallel with feeding there is a stimulation of lips and tongue...This stimulation is initially modelled on the (vital) function, so that between the two, it is at first barely possible to distinguish a difference. The object? It would appear to be furnished at the level of the function. Can we be sure whether it is still the milk or already the breast? The source? It too is determined by the feeding process, since the lips are also part of the digestive system. The aim as well is quite close to the aim of nourishment. Ultimately, object, aim, and source are intimately entwined in an extremely simple proposition allowing us to describe the process: "It's coming in by the mouth." 'It' is the object; 'coming in' is the aim, and whether a sexual or an alimentary aim is in question, the process is in any event a 'coming in'; 'by the mouth': at the level of the source, we find the same duplicity: the mouth is simultaneously a sexual organ and an organ of the feeding function" [Laplanche 1976, p. 17].

[Freud 1923]. The ego is a versatile agency, the centre of consciousness and identity as we understand it, closer to the external world than the other two, regulator of the input from the external world and co-ordinator of the demands of the other two agencies¹⁰. The superego, which is formed after the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, usually makes itself felt as a criticising agency. It sets high aims and evaluates the performance of the ego, it appears as the voice of conscience and occasionally turns against the ego with severity. The id is the *not-conscious par excellence*. In the last version of the agencies, it contains the older 'Unconscious' and whatever must remain repressed, barred, that is, from consciousness. Freud postulates that a basic principle of the system is the *Pleasure Principle*: part of the duties of the ego is to stop unpleasure from reaching consciousness, coming either from the outside world or from the id.

The Oedipus Complex

Let us return to sexuality: Freud accounts for both the early development and that last outcome, the genital maturity and the division of the sexes (feminine/masculine). It could be said that sexuality starts from inside (without separate objects) and ends outside (external objects). From the point of view of finding interest in and deriving satisfaction from external objects we could also say that it starts from an objectless disposition and proceeds to objects.

Given the early development of sexuality in the child, Freud postulates that the early sexual interests will inevitably be addressed to the mother or the person taking care of the child. The Oedipus complex represents the intervention of a rival, the father, who discourages the particular direction of sexuality and diverts it to other objects.

In its typical arrangement the Oedipus complex involves the triad: mother, father and child. In 'The language of Psychoanalysis' Laplanche and Pontalis (thereafter referred to as LP) define the Oedipus complex in the following way:

¹⁰ We will complete the properties of the ego later.

"Organised body of loving and hostile wishes which the child experiences towards its parents. In its so-called *positive* form, the complex appears as in the story of *Oedipus Rex*: a desire for the death of the rival- the parent of the same sex- and a sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex. In its *negative* form, we find the reverse picture: love for the parent of the same sex, and jealous hatred of the parent of opposite sex. In fact, the two versions are to be found in varying degrees in what is known as the *complete* form of the complex. According to Freud, the peak period for the experience of the Oedipus complex lies between the ages of three and five years, that is, during the phallic stage; its decline signals entry into a latency period. At puberty the complex is revived and is then surmounted with a varying degree of success by means of a particular sort of object-choice. The Oedipus complex plays a fundamental role in the structuring of the personality, and in the orientation of human desire" [LP, p. 282-7].

A main characteristic of the economy of the complex is the primacy of the male organ (phallus) and the fear of its loss (castration). Freud attributes the reality of the fear to observation. The child initially considers that all human beings have a phallus and that only those who are unworthy or punished lose it. The mother, in particular, seems to have a phallus for a long time and to find her castrated is considered decisive for the development of the child's complex [Freud 1923b, p. 311]. The fear of castration is consolidated by the child's experience of verbal threats that aim at discouraging any interest in the newly discovered genitals [Freud 1924, p. 317]. Freud assumes that castration defines the sexuality of both sexes¹¹. For both, it entails the loss of the

¹¹ Freud's attempts to account for feminine sexuality largely involve an extra detour in identifications. In 'Femininity' [1933c, pp. 145-69] and 'Female sexuality' [Freud 1931, p. 371-92] Freud assigns two extra tasks to the genesis of feminine sexuality: the displacement of the erotogenic zone (from the clitoris to the vagina) and the change of object, from mother to father. The difference between the sexes arises from the (famous) penis envy, the girl's resentment at realising she does not have a penis. Gradually the wish to have a penis turns into a wish to have a baby (by the father). This is when the little girl enters the oedipus complex and the hostility to her mother begins. Freud observes that unlike the boys: "the castration complex prepares for the Oedipus complex instead of destroying it; the girl is driven out of her attachment to her mother through the influence of her envy for the penis and she enters the Oedipus situation as though into a haven of refuge. In the absence of fear of castration the

penis- the masculine one as a result of punishment and the feminine one as a precondition. Freud generalises: "If the satisfaction of love in the field of the Oedipus complex is to cost the child his penis, a conflict is bound to arise between his narcissistic interest in that part of his body and the libidinal cathexis¹² of his parental object. In this conflict the first of these forces normally triumphs: the child's ego turns away from the Oedipus complex" [Freud 1924, p. 318].

A simple straightforward Oedipus complex can only be assumed for the simple cases where the little boy loves the mother and the little girl loves the father and the other parent is considered as a rival. But Freud soon realised that an inherent trend, the constitutional bisexuality¹³ of the human being, meant that a straightforward outcome of the complex and its identifications was by no means the general rule.

In fact the 'inherent bisexuality' of the human being meant that love and hate (*ambivalence*) can be directed to both parents, irrespective of the sex of the child: "a boy has not merely an ambivalent attitude towards his father and an affectionate object-choice towards his mother, but at the same time he also behaves like a girl and displays affectionate feminine attitude to his father and a corresponding jealousy and hostility to his mother" (*ibid*).

chief motive is lacking which leads boys to surmount the complex" [Freud 1933c, p. 163]. Freud himself recognised that his explanation of female sexuality was far from perfect. For Lacan the importance of the Oedipus complex and of the differences in the sexuality of men and women are to be accounted for in the level of their relation to the signifier. It is only on the symbolic plane that the Oedipus complex has any meaning, and Lacan locates the difference in a dissymetry in the signifier [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 176].

¹² Cathexis is an amount of psychical energy, conscious or unconscious, attached to an idea or an object. Object cathexis is the investment of an object or an idea with psychical energy [LP, p. 62-66]. In early developmental terms, the difference between (love) object and identification becomes somewhat confusing [LP, pp. 276, 207]. It would be better perhaps to describe it as the difference between taking in all the characteristics of the other (object) and taking in only a trait of it. As for the influence of identifications in the oedipal situation let us simply say that it removes the (erotic) cathexes of the other person and in its place institutes a trait-identification. The same authors stress the *dialectic* relationship of narcissism to identification in life.

¹³ The idea was adopted by Freud in order to account for the difficulties in the assumption of the characteristics of one sex [LP, p. 52]

Despite these difficulties and the explanatory inadequacy of the Oedipus complex in the case of feminine sexuality, Freud insisted that it was an adequate and necessary mechanism: "The broad outcome of the sexual phase dominated by the Oedipus complex, may, therefore, be taken to be the forming of a precipitate in the ego, consisting of these two identifications [mother and father] in some way united with each other. This modification of the ego retains its special position; it confronts the other contents of the ego as an ego ideal or super-ego" [Freud 1923 p. 373].

The notions *ego-ideal* (*super-ego*) and *identification* are to be understood in relation to another important notion in the Freudian field: *narcissism*. We are now looking at the Oedipus complex from a slightly different perspective. Narcissism is the early relation of the individual to oneself or an image of oneself (ex: the mother). Freud traces the origins of narcissism in early infancy when the sexual instinct is still satisfied via the ego or life supporting function. At that period, he says, a human being has at its disposal two sexual objects, "himself and the woman who nurses him" [Freud 1914]. This early 'choice' constitutes the 'primary narcissism'¹⁴.

The mechanism of the Oedipus complex 'transforms' narcissism and the dissolution of the complex results in an interesting reversal. When the narcissistic object is given up under the pressure of the threat of castration, it does not disappear, it is displaced outside. In the place of lost narcissism the *ideal-ego* is raised: "This ideal ego is now the target of the self-love which was enjoyed in childhood by the actual ego. The subject's narcissism makes its appearance displaced on this new ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, finds itself possessed of every perfection that is of value" [Freud 1914 p. 88].

¹⁴ It will later affect object-choices: "A person may love:

(1) According to the narcissistic type:

(a) what he himself is (i.e., himself), (b) what he himself was, (c) what he himself would like to be, (d) someone who was once part of himself.

(2) According to the anaclitic (attachment) type:

(a) the woman who feeds him, (b) the man who protects him, and the succession of substitutes who take their place" [Freud 1914, p84]

The agency responsible for the 'displacement' of narcissism outside the subject is the ideal-ego. Freud marks the affinity of the early narcissism to ego-ideal (superego) by this terminological reversal: ideal-ego/ ego-ideal. He comments: "... behind it [the ego-ideal] there lies hidden an individual's first and most important identification, his identification with the father in his own personal prehistory. This is apparently not in the first instance the consequence or outcome of an object-cathexis; it is a direct and immediate identification and takes place earlier than any object-cathexis¹⁵. But the object-choices belonging to the first sexual period and relating to the father and mother seem normally to find their outcome in an identification of this kind, and would thus reinforce the primary one" [Freud 1923, p. 370]. In terms of objects, therefore, the Oedipus complex decides the 'fate' of narcissism by putting an end to it but at the same time preserving it. The success lies in the tension of an identification and a love-choice which continues to exist because it is rendered inaccessible. The agency of the super-ego is born out of this restructuring and preserves and safeguards the established situation.

The relation between the ego and the super-ego, amicable or not, depends on the nature of the two agencies. Since we have introduced the notion of narcissism, we can complete the picture of the ego's functions. Freud assumed the existence of an almost irreducible and indestructible amount of energy, libido, which is invested and withdrawn from sexual objects. Apart from its regulatory role, the ego, which has its origin in the early narcissism,¹⁶ can also play the role of a sexual object. If necessary,

¹⁵ LP (p. 205) define identification as the process by which "the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides. It is by means of a series of identifications that the personality is constituted and specified".

¹⁶ After an undifferentiated oral phase where object-cathexes and identifications are still indistinguishable, the ego begins to react to the object-cathexes proceeding from the id: "and it either acquiesces in them or tries to fend them off by the process of repression" [Freud 1923, p. 368]. What happens to the *sexual object* that must be given up interests us here: "an alteration of [a person's] ego which can only be described as a setting up of the object inside the ego...by this introjection, which is a kind of regression to the mechanism of the oral phase, the ego makes it easier for the object to be given up or renders that process possible. It may be that this *identification* is the sole condition under which

it can withdraw the sexual interest (object-libido) from the external world and transform it (desexualisation) into narcissistic libido. This is more or less what happens in the oedipal phase when the interest from the mother is withdrawn: it is taken in. The same mechanism allows the ego to abandon sexual objects in all its life and also to safeguard its integrity.

When the superego turns against the ego, the latter perceives it as a threat of death. At this point Freud observes that living in fear of death cannot be derived from actual biological death nor is biological death interesting for analysis: "the fear of death is something that occurs between the ego and the super-ego" [Freud 1923, p. 400]. It is a development of *the fear of castration*, that forced the ego to abandon its object cathexis. "It would seem that the mechanism of the fear of death can only be that the ego *relinquishes its narcissistic libidinal cathexis* in a very large measure- that is, that it gives up itself, just as it gives up some *external* object in other cases in which it feels anxiety" (ibid).

Freud observes: "Putting it more generally, what the ego regards as the danger and responds to with anxiety-signals is that the super-ego should be angry with it and punish it or cease to love it. The final transformation which the fear of the super-ego undergoes is a fear of the super-ego projected on to the powers of destiny" [Freud 1926, p. 297].

Repression

The results of the Oedipus complex and its dissolution are, of course, kept away from consciousness. In "The dissolution of the Oedipus complex" Freud notes that the mechanism responsible for the dissolution of the complex is 'repression'. With repression we enter the domain of the id and what in very broad terms must remain there. To this he attributes the genesis of normality and illness: "we have here come upon the borderline-never a very sharply drawn one- between the normal and the pathological. If the ego has in fact not achieved much more than a *repression* of the

the id can give up its objects" [ibid, emphasis added] or, as Freud then adds, the only way for the ego to obtain control over the id.

complex, the latter persists in an unconscious state in the id and will later manifest its pathogenic effect" [Freud 1924, p. 319].

But in order to do justice to this key psychoanalytic concept we must refer to its two distinct functions: the repression in relation to the instinct and repression in general.

Repression subdues the 'instinct', the irresistible unspecified life pressure, to requirements of organisation and structure. The instinct is a force, a *pressure*, that directs the organism towards an *aim*. It has a *source*, some part of the body, its *aim* is to eliminate the tension it arises from there, and it achieves that via an *object* [LP, p. 214]. The instinct participates in the psyche as represented by an idea (*Vorstellung*) while it has a fixed portion of energy, a quota of affect permanently attached to it [LP, p. 374]. Repression bears on both.

Primal repression "consists in a psychical (*ideational*) *representative* of the instinct being denied entrance into the conscious. With this a fixation is established; the *representative* in question persists unaltered from then onwards and the instinct remains attached to it¹⁷" [Freud 1915b, p. 147, emphasis added]. Every other repression is modelled on this one and will be drawn towards this core: "The second stage of repression, repression proper, affects mental derivatives of the repressed representative, or such trains of thought as, originating elsewhere, have come into associative connection with it. On account of this association, these ideas experience the same fate as what was primally repressed. Repression proper, therefore, is actually an after-pressure" [ibid].

Banished in the unconscious the instinctual representative may not suffer permanent repression. It may 'proliferate in the dark'. From the experience of analytic associations Freud concludes that the instinctual representative may actually enter

¹⁷ *Primal repression is a fixation, an inhibition of development, of the instinct to an idea and the registration of this idea in the unconscious* [LP p. 33]. Laplanche and Pontalis point out that although the idea is essential the mechanism of its formation is far from clear: although the primary repressed will act a pole of attraction for other ideas undergoing repression their origin can only be attributed to anticathexis, defence mounted from the other side of the system, the ego: "As regards the nature of this anticathexis, it remains obscure. Freud considers that it is unlikely to derive from the super-ego, whose formation is subsequent to primal repression. Its origin should probably be sought in very intense archaic experiences..." (ibid).

consciousness when sufficiently distorted or made remote from the original idea [Freud 1915b, pp. 148-9]. This leads him to say that the effectiveness of repression must be maintained non stop: "The process of repression is not to be regarded as an event which takes place *once*, the results of which are permanent...repression demands a persistent expenditure of force, and if this were to cease the success of the repression would be jeopardised, so that a fresh act of repression would be necessary. We may suppose that the repressed exercises a continuous pressure in the direction of the conscious, so that this pressure must be balanced by an unceasing counter-pressure" [Freud 1915b, p. 151].

This is the basic relation between repression and the representative of the instinct and the affect, the unbound part of it: "either the instinct is altogether suppressed, so that no trace is found, or it appears as an affect which is in some way or other qualitatively coloured, or it is changed into anxiety" [Freud 1915b, p. 153]. It is in the last two cases that Freud situates the failure of repression: "If a repression does not succeed in preventing feelings of unpleasure or anxiety from arising, we may say that it has failed, even though it may have achieved its purpose as far as the ideational representative is concerned" [ibid].

Examining the *mechanism* of repression Freud observes that we know it works only through its outcome. He adds that the repression of the ideational representative creates substitutive formations and symptoms [Freud 1915b, p. 154]. These two are not results of repression but of *the return of the repressed*, more or less the failure of repression. Freud's last word before the examples is that repression is withdrawal of cathexis [Freud 1915b, p. 155].

The economy of cathexes, the surfacing of ideational representatives into consciousness and the idea of repression are key parts in the theory of the 'unconscious'.

The unconscious: a very short introduction

The unconscious¹⁸ is not the mysterious world of dark forces but another organised, law-governed system. Laplanche and Pontalis list the essential characteristics of the unconscious in the following way:

- "a. Its 'contents' are 'representatives' of the instincts.
 - b. These contents are governed by the mechanisms specific to the primary process, essentially by condensation and displacement.
 - c. Strongly cathected by instinctual energy, they seek to re-enter consciousness and resume activity (the return of the repressed), but they can only gain access to the system Pre-conscious-Conscious in compromise-formations after having undergone the distortions of the censorship.
 - d. It is more essentially childhood wishes that become fixated in the unconscious"
- [LP, p. 474].

In "The Unconscious" Freud distinguishes between *Conscious (Cs)*, *Preconscious (Pcs)* and *Unconscious (Unc)*.¹⁹ While the preconscious and the unconscious are distinguished by their degree of accessibility²⁰, the difference between conscious and unconscious is explained by resorting to our certainty about what is conscious: "There is no need to discuss what is to be called conscious: it is removed from all doubt. The oldest and best meaning of the word 'unconscious' is the descriptive one; we call a psychical process unconscious whose existence we are obliged to assume- for some such reason as that we infer it from its effects- but of which we know nothing...we call

¹⁸ A nice and relatively easy introduction to the Freudian notion of the unconscious is given by Manoni (1971).

¹⁹ Abbreviations appear instead of the full word in the original. We will be using them when quoting.

²⁰ Freud draws on analytic experiences: sometimes in analysis a patient may miss the significance of a remark he has just made. If he recognises it when pointed out to him then the thought in the remark was only temporarily unavailable, preconscious but easily drawn to the surface. If, however, he refuses to see the thought then, says Freud, we have come across an unconscious thought [Freud 1933b, p. 103].

a process unconscious if we are obliged to assume that it is being activated *at the moment*, though *at the moment* we know nothing about it" [Freud 1933b, p. 102].

The unconscious is developed in two directions: a. its contents and internal structure, b. its relation to consciousness and the communication of the systems.

"The nucleus of the Unconscious" says Freud "consists of instinctual representatives which seek to discharge their cathexis; that is to say, it consists of wishful impulses" [Freud 1915c, p. 190]. The peculiar relation of the representatives in the unconscious gives it its special character. They exist side by side. Even when their aims seem incompatible they may combine and form an intermediate aim, a compromise. There is no negation, no doubt, no certainty in the unconscious. There is no 'time' in the sense that its processes are not ordered temporally and are not altered by the passage of time. There are only "contents cathected with greater or lesser strength". The working principle of the unconscious is the '*primary process*', a mode of combination of ideas by *condensation* and *displacement*: "by the process of displacement one idea may surrender to another its whole quota of cathexis; by the process of condensation it may appropriate the whole cathexis of several ideas" (ibid).

The communication between the unconscious and the conscious interests Freud as much as the former's contents. While neurotic symptoms and dreams afford us an insight into the eruption of the unconscious despite repression (see, for example, how condensation and displacement work in dreams [Freud 1933, p. 49]) the smooth transition from the one agency to the other and the linking of different representatives is secured by the intervention of the preconscious. It imposes some order onto ideational representatives: "it devolves upon the system Pcs. to make communication possible between the different ideational contents so that they can influence one another, to give them an order in time, and to set up a censorship ; 'reality-testing' too, and the reality principle, are in its province" [Freud 1915c, p. 193]. On the issue of unconscious impulse-representatives and their derivatives arriving at consciousness Freud develops the following arrangement: "The Unc. is turned back on the frontier of the Pcs. by the censorship, but derivatives of the Unc. can circumvent this censorship, achieve a high degree of organisation and reach a certain intensity of cathexis in the Pcs. When however, this intensity is exceeded and they try to force themselves into consciousness, they are recognised as derivatives of the Unc. and are repressed afresh

at the new frontier of censorship, between the Pcs and the Cs. Thus the first of these censorship is exercised against the Unc. itself, and the second against its Pcs derivatives. One might suppose that in the course of individual development the censorship had taken a step forward" [Freud 1915c, p. 198].

The Oedipus complex could be seen as representing a cross-roads; the complex brings together a variety of features such as the fact that human sexuality is completed in two stages, childhood and adolescence, with a latency period between them and the fact is that the phallic stage will not be fully developed into genital sexuality until then. The sexual instinct undergoes considerable transformation too. Freud speaks not only of the effects of repression but also of other vicissitudes if repression does not work properly. Regression to earlier phases of sexuality (oral or anal-sadistic) are possible and in fact are quite common in illness. In most cases the characteristics of a sex are assumed under the combined pressure of channelling the instinct into genital sexuality and of conforming to external behavioural patterns. The superego may play a role in illness with its severity. Upon the division into *subject (ego)- object (external world)*, *pleasure- unpleasure*, *active- passive*. Freud sketches the future of castration and the polarity of the sexes: "A first antithesis is introduced with the choice of object, which, of course, presupposes a subject and an object. At the stage of the pregenital sadistic-anal organisation, there is as yet no question of male and female; the antithesis between active and passive is the dominant one. At the following stage of infantile genital organisation, which we now know about, maleness exists, but not femaleness. The antithesis here is between having a male genital organ and being castrated. It is not until development has reached its completion at puberty that the sexual polarity coincides with male and female. Maleness combines [the factors of] subject, activity and possession of the penis; femaleness takes over [those of] object and passivity" [Freud 1924, p. 312].

What can go wrong always remains bound to the particulars of the situation and Freud always insists that each case is an individual case. Freud has documented a variety of disturbances and problems, ranging from withdrawal of cathexis in mourning to excessive super-ego demands and to analysing sadistic phantasies and homosexuality. In "Sexuality in neuroses" [Freud 1906, pp. 71-81] and in the summary of the "Three

essays on sexuality" he specifies a number of internal and external factors that can influence sexuality towards normality or illness, including constitution and heredity, weakness of the genital zone, excessive repression, sublimation and accidental experiences [Freud 1905, p. 164 and Freud 1906, p. 76]. The analytic inquiry into the patient's history goes, as we know, back to childhood and into the unconscious where forgotten experiences or the real reasons for any such 'developmental fixations' may be found [Freud 1906, p. 77]. Again Freud looks in the direction of repression as a conditioning factor in the process of development [Freud 1906, p.78, Freud 1905, p. 163 and Freud 1919, p. 162] and concludes: "I showed that normality is a result of the repression of certain component instincts and constituents of the infantile disposition and of the subordination of the remaining constituents under the primacy of the genital zones in the service of the reproductive function. I showed that perversions correspond to disturbances of this coalescence owing to the overpowering and compulsive development of certain of the component instincts, while neuroses can be traced back to an excessive repression of the libidinal trends" [Freud 1906, p. 79].

LACAN: LANGUAGE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

The signifier in Linguistics and in Psychoanalysis

It is impossible to speak about Lacan's psychoanalysis without introducing the notions of the Signifier and the Signified. The terms originate in Linguistics. They were first used systematically by F Saussure to differentiate between the acoustic image (Signifier) and the concept (Signified) and to stress that there is no inherent relation between the two²¹. [Lemaire 1970, p. 12]. Saussure writes: S/ s, the Signified over the signifier, the concept over the word.

²¹ There is nothing that relates the concept 'tree' with the particular string of letters in the English language.

It is beyond the scope of this presentation to explain why Saussure's formulation was considered revolutionary and marked the beginning of modern linguistics. Suffice it to say, that with Saussure the study of language was reorientated to systematicity rather than to the history and the origin of words.

From Saussure onwards language is defined by the following properties: "The language is: 1. transcendent 2. diacritical 3. comprehensive 4. conventional 5. binary" [Boothby 1991, p. 120].

The first term implies that man enters an already organised system, an "established institution" into which he is accepted: "The human being's relation to language is less that of a workman to his tools than it is like that between a fish and the water in which it swims and breathes" [Boothby 1991, p. 121].

The second term, diacritical, implies that language is a system governed by internal relations on all levels, from utterance to phoneme. The meaning of an element is determined by its position in the organisation of the whole: "the respective value of the pieces depends on their position on the chessboard" (ibid).

The third term stresses the endless possibilities of language in covering and representing 'new' meanings or meanings for which it does not have specific words.

The fourth term summarises Saussure's innovation: the arbitrariness of the signifier, or, in very simple terms, that there is only a conventional relation between a concept, e.g.: 'tree', and the series of phonemes put together to represent it.

Finally the fifth term states that language can be broken down to minimal units, (phonemes) which can also be broken down to distinctive features. The distinctive features are qualitative oppositions of sounds, ex: voiced/voiceless, aspirated/non-aspirated etc. Words therefore are bundles of distinctive features, combination acceptable in the particular language.

The operations of *selection* and *combination* govern language at all levels. Selection and combination are 'the two axes of language'. With words, for instance, selection is related to 'the storehouse of memory', the pool of words in which a particular one belongs, semantically or otherwise. The word 'education', for instance, can be associated through its meaning (signifier) to 'upbringing', 'training' etc. and through its sound (signified) to 'educate', 'educator' or even to 'application' 'vindication' etc. [Lemaire 1970, p. 30-1]. Selection is the range of synonyms and antonyms for each

signifier. *Combination* refers to the terms present in the sentence, those that were chosen out of the possible candidates for each 'slot' in the sentence. Here the emphasis is on what permits all these signifiers to appear next to each other: the rules of concatenation that govern a language (ibid). In traditional grammar terms we would find the equivalent of this axis under 'syntax'. Combination and selection will later become Lacan's metonymy and metaphor.

For the purposes of psychoanalysis Lacan writes: *S/s*, the signifier over the signified. He accepts that we are human beings because of language. We are 'humanised' when we enter language and the system of organised relations in which we have a place and in which we designate ourselves with a proper name. Lacan had to adapt the ideas borrowed from Linguistics to the requirements of the analytic field. The analyst deals with symptoms. The symptoms are expressions (verbal, kinetic or other) of a 'problem' that remains obscure to the patient himself. He comes to analysis for cure, in order to find out, with the analyst's help, what is the meaning of the symptom, or, in other words, what the symptom tries to say.

The reversal of the Signifier/signified 'summarises' a major deviation from Saussurean linguistics that can only be understood in relation to the process of psychoanalysis and the value of speech (actual concrete language) in it. Like Freud²², Lacan was interested in developing a system that could account both for the genesis of sexuality/meaning (now that language was introduced) and for why the analysand's speech can successfully lead both to the meaning of his symptoms and to their cure. In a sense, Lacan considers the symptom as a signifier without meaning. He knows that

²² Freud never developed a theory of language in relation to the unconscious/ primary process. He confined its use to consciousness, to the secondary process. He had observed, however, that the primary process was governed by the laws of condensation and displacement, that the communication of the systems conscious and unconscious was possible by means of association of a thing presentation (an unconscious idea) with a word presentation and had attributed great significance to the primal repression, the repression of the ideational representative of the instinct in the unconscious. Lacan brings the laws of language to these. He revises the signifier and uses metonymy and metaphor in relation to condensation and displacement.

its meaning is not lost but resides in the unconscious and occasionally overpowers repression and surfaces in language (return of the repressed). He starts from there.

The Lacanian *Subject*

Before proceeding with our discussion we need to introduce- though slightly out of context- the terms *Imaginary*, *Symbolic*, *Real* and *Other* in order to align some of Lacan's ideas to Freud's. We need to stress right from the beginning that Lacan's interest lies in the *Subject*,²³ not the subject-ego of the Freudian topologies but the *Subject of the Unconscious*. The basic idea of the Lacanian subject is given (further down) in the schema L.

The symbolic is the register of language. It is also the law-governed body of relations by which society is defined and held together (relations of kinship, prohibition of incest etc.). Both language and society are organised structures/systems. According to [Laplanche and Pontalis 1972]: "Lacan's use of the notion of the symbolic appears to serve two purposes: a) to relate the structure of the unconscious to that of language and to apply to the former the same methods which proved fruitful in linguistics; b) to show how the human subject comes to be inscribed within a pre-established order which is itself symbolic in nature..." [Laplanche and Pontalis 1972]. The terms 'symbolic' however, and any Lacanian term for that matter, cannot be defined very strictly. As LP note this would be 'against the spirit' of Lacan's thought. Thus they recommend that the 'symbolic' in general and the previous definition in particular should be considered as two complementary parts: structure (of discrete elements) and law, introduced to each and every individual by the father in the oedipal adventure. (ibid).

The Imaginary²³ is the register of narcissism. The primordial mother-child relation is to be found in this register. The functions of the ego, its relation to the ideal-ego and all the aspects of sexuality belong there too. [Laplanche and Pontalis 1972, p. 192].

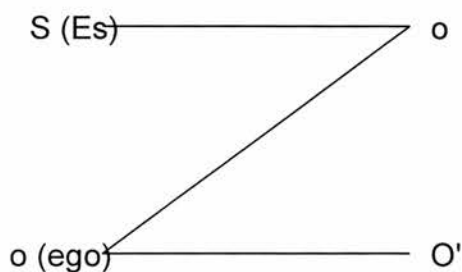
²³ The Imaginary and the Symbolic are discussed from a different perspective in the next chapter. Here we focus on the mechanisms of the Symbolic mainly.

The Real²⁴ should not be confused with reality. It is better defined as neither symbolic nor imaginary and is excluded from language, from symbolisation [Lacan 1973, p. 280]. The statement most often associated with the Real is 'that which returns to the same place' and in that sense it means the trauma as not-incorporated in the other two registers [Bowie 1991, pp. 94-5].

The Other is a versatile but often confusing notion. It means a) the unconscious; b) language, the site of the signifier, the Symbolic; c) the site of intersubjectivity between patient and analyst in analysis; d) the Mother and the Father; e) the third party invoked in analysis when it comes to the question of truth [Lemaire 1970, p. 157]. Most of the times Lacan refuses to specify which one he means, thus leaving it upon the reader to decide. The general intention is to let the term *Other* reverberate with the connotations of its constitution and its decidedly oedipal character²⁵.

In "*Ecrits*" [Lacan 1959, p. 193] we find a representation of the *subject of the unconscious*. It is known as schema L and summarises Lacan's interest in the unconscious (Other).

Boothby [1991, p. 172] maps Freud's relevant notions on schema L: S = Id, o (ego) = ego, o (other) = reality and the object relation, O = superego. Though oversimplified and slightly misleading this comparison can serve as an approximation of the two theories.



²⁴ The Real appears very little in our discussions.

²⁵ We will not be using the fifth meaning at all. As for the other four we will be trying to specify the particular use according to the occasion. I must make it clear, however, that the desired effect (by Lacan) relies in their non-specificity.

The schema describes the subject's relation to the Other, and the interpersonal relations of the ego with other human beings. Though 'static' it represents the tensions which really *are* 'the subject' in the Lacanian sense. The four corners of the *subject* are: (S), "the locus of its ineffable existence"; o (small letter standing for 'other', different from O), his objects; o', his ego; and O, the locus from which the question of existence is presented to him beyond the anxieties of the ego [Lacan 1959, p. 194].

The SO' diagonal shows that the subject is dependent on what is being unfolded in the Other [Lacan 1959, p. 193], which is articulated as sporadic discourse according to the laws of signification, as opposed to the relative stability of the images of the ego.

This is the way in which Lacan describes what one encounters in analysis: "...it is a truth of experience for analysis that the subject is presented with the question of his existence...as an articulated question: 'What am I there?', concerning his sex and his contingency in being, namely, that, on the one hand, he is a man or a woman, and, on the other, that he might not be, the two conjugating their mystery, and binding it in the symbols of procreation and death. That the question of his existence bathes the subject, supports him, invades him, tears him apart even, is shown in the tensions, the lapses, the phantasies that the analyst encounters; and, it should be added, by means of elements of the particular discourse in which this question is articulated in the Other. It is because these phenomena are ordered in the figures of this discourse that they have the fixity of symptoms, are legible and can be resolved when deciphered" [Lacan 1959, p. 194].

The Quilting point and the retroactive effect of meaning

Let us now return to the properties of the S(ignifier)/ s(ignified) in order to see how Lacan treats their relationship.

Following Saussure, he advocates the autonomy of the signifier in the following sense: the meaning of a signifier is always to be found in another signifier whose meaning is to be found in another signifier and so on, thus making it possible to exhaust the entire vocabulary of a language going from signifier to signifier. In this

conception of language the signified seems to disappear. As Wilden explains the emphasis is now on the flow from signifier to signifier and the correspondence of the signifier and the signified must be understood as a correspondence between *the totality* of the signifier to the *totality of* the signified" [Wilden 1968, p. 239].

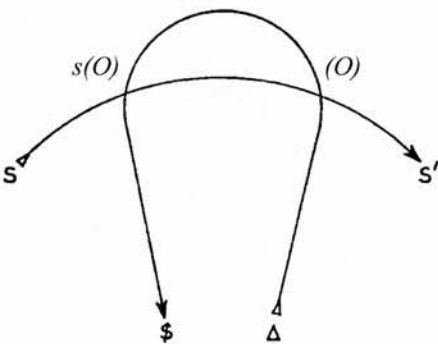
In the "Agency of the letter" Lacan demonstrates the supremacy of the signifier over the signified by substituting the signified of the door-signs 'ladies' and 'gentlemen' with the same signifier-image, the sketch of two identical lavatory doors. Reference to the signified (to the doors) is of course inadequate to explain its meaning. This can only be done by further reference to other signifiers [Lacan 1957, p. 151-2]. Further on, Lacan attributes special significance to the bar that in the S/s sign separates its two parts. This bar, he says, is resistant to signification, and by this he means the separation of the unconscious from the conscious. The signified is the unconscious meaning and it is 'arrived at' in analysis via the flow of the signifier.

This is the point at which Lacan deviates from Saussure. While Saussure could assume that the totality of the signifier never meets the totality of meanings/signified, Lacan had to arrive at in some sort of signified in analysis. Lemaire explains: "In psychoanalysis, the signified is reached only at the outcome of the analytic treatment. Placed in the circuit of consciousness, each layer of the unconscious which has been revealed takes refuge in 'mystery'. If one then goes back in analytic time from layer to layer, from chain to chain, one eventually encounters the original text of the unconscious" [Lemaire 1970, p. 45].

This signified, which, in essence, is just another signifier 'banished' in the unconscious defines the function of language in the Lacanian field. It is *the point de capiton*, *the quilting point* by virtue of which speech is drawn to a centre of gravity. Bowie comments: "it [the signified] appears as that which the signifier almost successfully dispels, and its characteristic motions are those of slipping, sliding, hesitating, fleeing, expiring, dispersing, disappearing. And when Lacan comes to acknowledge the strange power of endurance that certain meanings nevertheless have, and the ability of such meanings to hold human lives together or to wreck them, he speaks not of signifieds that have somehow broken free from their tutelage to the signifier but of 'the point to which signified and signifier come together to be knotted together'...These fixated meanings are *points de capiton*- upholstery buttons, or places

where the mattress-maker's needle has worked hard to prevent a shapeless mass of stuffing from moving too freely about. If these points are too firmly implanted they can drive the individual to despair and self-sacrifice, but if they are too few or too loose they threaten him with madness...between the extremes of suicide and psychosis lies the fabric of ordinary lives- the upholstery of speech, the impersonal structures of language that weigh upon our freely chosen words and button them down" [Bowie 1991, p. 74].

Taken from 'The subversion of the subject' [Lacan 1960, p. 303, $s(O)$ and (O) added] the graph below is a visual representation of the function of the quilting pointing and of another important feature of the Lacanian conception of language, the retroactivity of meaning.



Zizek explains: "What we have here is simply the graphic presentation of the relation between signifier and signified. As is well known, Saussure visualised²⁶ this relation as two parallel undulating lines or two surfaces of the same sheet: the linear progression of the signified runs parallel to the linear articulation of the signifier. Lacan structures the double movement quite differently: some mythical, pre-symbolic intention (marked \ddot{A}) 'quilts' the signifier's chain, the series of the signifier marked by the vector SS' . The product of this quilting (what 'comes out on the other side' after the mythical -real- intention goes through the signifier and steps out of it) is the subject marked by the matheme $\$$ (the divided split subject, and at the same time the effaced signifier, the lack of signifier..." [Zizek 1989, p. 101].

²⁶ See [Lacan:Miller 1981, p261] for Saussure's schema.

We will ignore the notion of the split subject for the moment. It refers to the 'genesis' of the subject of the unconscious we have not yet introduced. We will say, instead, that the concept of the retroactive effect of signification allows us to represent the signifying intentions of the subject (the production of speech in order to say something) as proceeding from a point (O, unconscious) which endows them with meaning belatedly. An example of how the quilting point and the retroactive effect of meaning work in practice is given by Lacan in 'The Psychoses'. He reads Racine's *Athaliah* [Lacan:Miller 1981, pp. 258-67] in such a way as to derive the key signifier 'Fear of god' out of the entire signification of the play. As he observes 'the fear of god' is nowhere to be found as a signifier in the play; it is however the (missing) key signifier, the one on which all signifiers converge, and is, therefore, the quilting point to be arrived at 'later', by the signifying intention of the entire play.

Because the big O stands for both 'unconscious' and the 'Symbolic' the signifier 'Fear of God' always resonates with the social/religious connotations that make it an exceptional signifier. It conveys the idea of a god that is or should be feared, and who inspires a multitude of other fears [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 267]. It is the double origin of the subject's language in his 'private' unconscious and in the social register that Lacan invites us always to bear in mind.

The Paternal Metaphor

Let us now turn to Lacan's version of the Oedipus complex, the unconscious and language. The purpose of the Oedipus complex is to destroy the dual relationship of the mother and the child (primary narcissism). Lacan speaks of its outcomes as the institution of the *Paternal metaphor* (or, *Name of the Father*)²⁷. He uses the linguistic term, metaphor, in order to stress *the symbolic* nature of the operation, the fact that it is in essence a story of *representation*.

The notion of representation is important. We can think of the Signifier/signified relation, the word 'tree' and the object (tree) we recognise in nature. The linguistic

²⁷ For a thorough discussion of the Paternal metaphor see [Ragland 1995] chapter 6.

representation brings the tree into language but not the object itself and relates it to other signifiers. In a similar fashion the human being is 'only' represented in language. This 'only' should be understood in two ways. First, in terms of the use of language: by using a proper name or saying 'I' the speaking subject 'summarises' the variety of factors and elements he really is as part of an organised society. Second, and most important for our discussion, the ability to say 'I' marks the separation of the Unconscious, its 'dropping out', its creation as a 'hidden structure'. Lacan notes: "if the subject who is called 'John' or who translates himself in discourse as 'I' saves himself through this nomination in so far as he inscribes himself in the circuit of exchange, he becomes, on the other hand, lost to himself, for any mediate relationship imposes a rupture of the inaugural continuity between self and self, self and other, self and the world" [Lemaire 1970, p. 68]. In other words, by entering language as 'John' or 'I' it is subjected to *the division between representation, the 'I' of the utterance, and what is represented, himself as subject*. The 'I' of the discourse and the 'I' of the enunciation (the speaking subject) will never again coincide.

The unconscious is engendered by two operations: alienation and separation²⁸ [Lacan 1973]. We will discuss alienation, which is related to the Imaginary, Narcissism and

²⁸ Two operations, *alienation and separation*, engender the unconscious. The idea of *representation* is central to their function. In order to understand their function we should go back to Freud's primal repression, which concerns the repression of the idea representing an instinct. By being attached to an 'idea' (to use Freud's word) the instinct enters the unconscious. The idea, the signifier representing the instinct, is then repressed. Lacan stresses the significance of recognising exactly what is repressed: something that is already of the order of representation- since the instinct cannot enter the unconscious in any other form but through a representation. This is Lacan's *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* [Lacan 1973, p. 217], the equivalent of Freud's primal repression effected upon entry to language, constituting by-half the unconscious and bearing upon the repression or the loss of an object particular to the instinct. Lacan observes: "We locate this *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* in our schema of the original mechanisms of alienation in *that first signifying coupling* that enables us to conceive that the subject appears first in the Other, in so far as the first signifier, the *unary* signifier, emerges in the field of the Other and represents the subject for another signifier..." [Lacan 1973, p. 218, emphasis added].

Alienation is explained by Lacan as the subject's division from its cause, cause being the unconscious or what it signifies there: "The register of the signifier is established because a signifier represents a subject for another signifier...being produced in the place of the Other (*the symbolic*), the signifier

causes the subject to arise there, but at the cost of becoming fixed. What was ready to speak there disappears, being no longer anything more than a signifier...the alienation resides in the division of the subject from its cause...our subject is faced with the *vel* [symbol of disjunction in mathematics] of receiving a certain meaning or being petrified. But if it keeps the meaning, it is this field of meaning which will be eaten into by the non-sense produced by his being changed into a signifier" (quoted by Lemaire 1970, p. 76, emphasis added).

For both Freud and Lacan the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, the binary signifier, will become the central point of the repressed, the pole of attraction for all subsequent repressions. Why this is important is explained along the lines of the second operation, *separation*. It takes up from the point of alienation, given that the first representation of the instinct is already alienating in its essence- at least as far as the preverbal, unary, mythical subject is concerned. The key to separation is the overlap of two lacks, one originating in the loss of the primordial complement (object of the partial instinct) the other coming from the Other with the full force of 'desire' in it. Very often Lacan says that *man's desire is the desire of the Other*, and the Other is primarily the M-Other in the beginning: "The desire of the Other is apprehended by the subject in that which does not work, in the lacks of the discourse of the Other, and all the child's *whys* reveal not so much an avidity for the reason of things, as a testing of the adult, a *Why are you telling me this?* ever-resuscitated from its base, which is the enigma of the adult desire. Now, to reply to this hold, the subject...brings the answer of the previous lack, of his own disappearance, which he situates here at the point of lack perceived in the Other. The first object he proposes for this parental desire whose object is unknown is his own loss- *Can he lose me?* The phantasy of one's own death, of one's own disappearance, is the first object that the subject has to bring into play in this dialectic, and he does indeed bring it into play..." [Lacan, p. 214]. What 'the desire of the Other' means in its properly unconscious foundation and its relation to the signifier is explained by Benvenuto and Kennedy [1986, p. 130]: "In Lacan's view, the object of human desire is the desire of the Other in at least two senses: one can translate the French '*le désir de l'Autre*' as both the Other's desire (not mine but the Other's), and as desire for the Other. The infant early on tries to identify himself with the mother's object of desire in order to be that object of desire, which in addition he has desires for her. This basic structure of desire would follow from the law of the signifier, in that it signifies something only in relation to another signifier, so desire is always desire for *another* thing".

Along similar lines Lemaire chooses a quote from Lacan with emphasis on language: "The subject realises himself in the loss from which he sprang forth as an unconscious. Here *separare*, separate, ends in *se parere*, to engender oneself. *This sliding from one verb to another* is based upon their common pairing with the function of the *pars* ... Here, it is from his partition to his parturition that the subject proceeds. *Parere* is firstly to produce. This is why the subject can produce what concerns him here, a status which we will qualify as civil (*état civil*). Nothing in anyone's life unchains a greater determination to arrive..." [Lemaire 1970, p. 7]. Due to the same operation the subject will be able to 'implant' his lack in the symbolic, make it 'audible' there: "In order to deck himself out (*se parer*) in the

the Ego, in the next chapter. Here, we will concentrate on the paternal metaphor which Lemaire puts in context in the following way: "By forbidding dual union with the mother, the resolution of the Oedipus forces the subject's original desire, together with all its accompanying phantasies, into the position of something misrecognised, and substitutes a symbol for them in accordance with the process of the 'paternal metaphor'. In other words, accession to the symbolic order is simultaneous with and indissolubly connected with *primal repression* which, for the Lacanians, is effected in accordance with the formal process of metaphor" [Lemaire 1970, p. 95].

A metaphor allows the substitution of one term for another, the former falling to the level of the signified [Lemaire 1970, p. 86]. The usual representation provided by Lacan is:

$$\frac{S}{S} \cdot \frac{S}{s} \rightarrow S\left(\frac{1}{s}\right)$$

The oedipal scenario is recast with emphasis on the phallus: At first, wishing to secure the presence of the mother the child wishes to become everything to her by trying to be the object that satisfies every desire of hers, the phallus. This is the period of the primary narcissism for which Lemaire observes that the child "is not a subject, but a lack, a nothing, because he is not individually situated...he merges with the object of the other's desire and, fusing with his mother as a mere extension of her, presents himself as a nothing as a blank" [Lemaire 1970, p. 82]. At a second stage, the father intervenes and he deprives the child of the object of his desire: "the child comes up against the Forbidden ... he encounters the Law of the father" [Lemaire 1970, p. 83]. At a third stage, he identifies with the father and registers himself in language through this relativisation. The last step is very important and the mother herself plays an important role in its realisation: "If.. the father is recognised by the mother both as a

signifier to which he succumbs, the subject attacks the chain, which we have now reduced to a simple binarity, in its interval. The interval which is repeated, the most radical structure of the signifying chain, is the cite haunted by metonymy, the vehicle of desire....it is the extent that the subject experiences something Other than the effects of meaning solicited of him by discourse motivating him in this interval that he effectively encounters the desire of the Other. What he will place there is his own lack. But what he thus fills in is the constituent loss of one of his own parts, because of which he finds himself constituted in two parts" (ibid).

man and as the representative of the Law, the subject will have access to the 'name of the father' or 'paternal metaphor... If the child does not accept the Law, or if the mother does not recognise this position in the father, the subject will remain identified with the phallus and subjected to the mother's desire" (ibid). What the Paternal metaphor does, of course, in terms of signifiers, is, to install the paternal signifier, a representation of the Father, in the Other, in the Unconscious. The withdrawal for the lived experience, from the immediacy of the relation to the mother, is *substituted* by a signifier. Lemaire observes: "Primal repression is only possible if the subject posits himself as no more being the thing or the lived experience that the substitute he gives to this lived experience. This repression is therefore only possible if the subject has at his disposal an original signifier of self which he can posit as the negative of his coanaesthesia and which will allow him to effect the negation inherent in primal repression: the thing is no more its substitute than it is the self" [Lemaire 1970, p. 86]. By being given this signifier by the father, the child can accede to the symbolic order. The formal representation of the Oedipal substitution and repression is given by an adaptation of the metaphor formula [Lacan 1959]:

$$\frac{\text{Name - of - the - Father}}{\text{Desire of the Mother}} \cdot \frac{\text{Desire of the Mother}}{\text{Signified to the subject}} \longrightarrow \text{Name - of - the - Father} \left(\frac{O}{\text{Phallus}} \right)$$

Lemaire observes: "I do not think it false to say that of the subject 'crosses himself out' in the Spaltung (the separation-repression of the Unconscious), if he effaces himself to the profit of a signifier, it is in so far as he is the phallus that he is crossed out. The lack of being engendered by the imposition of the law explains the eternalisation of the desire, which is metonymically displaced from signifier to signifier in the 'demand', that is, for Lacan, in the traditional forms of culture"²⁹ [Lemaire 1970, p. 88].

²⁹ In "The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis" Lacan [1973] explains the 'character' of the unconscious by giving an account of the unconscious in Freud and his own theory according to the function of the cause. What interests us here is Lacan's view of the manifestation and the origin of the unconscious: 'At first, the unconscious is manifested to us as something that holds itself in suspense in the area, I would say of the unborn. That repression should discharge something into this area is not

Phallus and Desire

Let us continue our discussion by clarifying some of the terms appearing in Lemaire's statement: the phallus, or better, why the phallus in the particular equation, desire, demand, and finally, the metonymic displacement from signifier to signifier.

Lacan's theory of signification is 'completed' with the signification of the phallus, which appears both in relation to the maternal desire prohibited/lost forever to the subject and in relation to the division of the sexes. Lacan sketches the directions of analysis to the point of leading the patient to see the function of the phallus in his desire [Lacan 1961, p. 267]. Arriving at the function of the phallus, no matter what one discovers there, is defined by Lacan as the objective and the end of analysis [Lacan 1961, p. 274]. Approaching the constitution of the unconscious and the emergence of desire from the point of the phallus-as-signifier allows Lacan to say: "it

surprising" [Lacan 1973, p. 23]. Looking for the product-at-the-gap, Lacan observes that by nature they appear and disappear, they come and go, a fact which allows him to speak of 'discovery' and 'rediscovery' of what surprises the subject as it is produced but also, and most important for our case, about the discontinuity of the unconscious. In the discontinuity of the unconscious Lacan sees the most fundamental and subject-making function of the unconscious by refusing to place it against a background of totality: "Is the *one* anterior to discontinuity? I do not think so" says Lacan and goes on to specify that analysis is not interested in some sort of 'enveloping psyche' or some sort of 'double of the organism', that the only one " introduced by the experience of the unconscious is the one of split, of the stroke, of rupture" [Lacan 1973, p. 26]. He therefore urges analysts not to think of the unconscious as the discontinuous as opposed to continuous or total but to keep their eyes fixed on *the subject qua indeterminate*. The following quotation may be considered, I believe, as a statement on principles by Lacan: "If you keep hold of this initial structure, you will avoid giving yourself up to some partial aspect of the question of the unconscious- as, for example, that it is the subject, *qua* alienated in his history, at the level at which the syncope of discourse is joined with his desire. You will see that, more radically, it is in the dimension of a synchrony that you must situate the unconscious- at the level of being, but in the sense that it can spread over everything, that is to say, at the level of the subject of the enunciation, in so far as, according to the sentences, according to the modes, it loses itself as much as it finds itself again, and in the sense that, in an interjection, in an imperative, in an invocation, even in a hesitation, it is always the unconscious that presents you with its enigma, and speaks- in short, at the level at which everything that blossoms in the unconscious spreads, like mycelium (fungus), as Freud says about the dream, around a central point. It is always a question of the subject *qua* indeterminate" (ibid).

belongs to being, and man, whether male or female, must accept having it and not having it, on the basis of the discovery that he isn't it. It is here that is inscribed the final Spaltung by which the subject articulates himself in the Logos..." [Lacan 1961, p. 277].

The phallus is inscribed in the dialectic of signification: "It is the signifier intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier" [Lacan 1958, p. 285]. It represents the entire oedipal drama of the desire of the Other, hence it becomes a 'privileged signifier' for its access to desire and demand and the elusive 'wholeness' of being. This is how Lacan describes the effect of the phallus as signifier: "A condition of complementarity is produced in the establishment of the subject by the signifier- which explains the Spaltung in the subject and the movement of intervention in which the 'spitting' is completed.

Namely:

- (1) that the subject designates his being only by barring everything he signifies, as it appears in the fact that he wants to be loved for himself, a mirage that cannot be dismissed as merely grammatical (since it abolishes discourse);
- (2) that the living part of that being in the *urverdrängt* (primal repressed) finds its signifier by receiving the mark of the *Verdrängung* (repression) of the phallus (by virtue of which the unconscious is language) [Lacan 1958, p. 288].

Because the phallus is a signifier, the subject has access to it in the Other and it is because of that fact that Lacan calls it 'the ratio of the other's desire' which does not have to do with finding it there but with discovering that the Other, too, is subject to the same signifying Spaltung. The importance of this statement must be appreciated against the other Freudian/Lacanian assumption that the Other is initially taken to be complete and capable of satisfying any need. Lacan situates the branching off of normality and illness at the moment of discovery that the Other (mother) does not have it: "This is the moment of the experience without which no symptomatic consequence (phobia) or structural consequence (penisneid [penis envy]) relating to the castration complex can take effect. Here is signed the conjunction of desire, in that the phallic signifier is its mark, with the threat or nostalgia of lacking it" [Lacan 1958,

p. 289]. The transition from being to having or not having the phallus will on the one hand give reality to the subject and on the other *derealize* the relations signified.

The word 'desire' has appeared a few times in our discussion, in relation to the mother and the phallus. Indeed, it is the term Lacan uses to designate what is essentially lacking, unsatisfiable, left out and consequently inexhaustible in relation to sexuality and being. Desire is different from 'need', the *organic manifestation of a lack* (ex: hunger). It is also different from 'demand', the *verbal manifestation of a lack*. Sheridan relates the three terms in the following way: "The human individual sets out with a particular organism, with certain biological needs, which are satisfied by certain objects. What effects does the acquisition of language have on these needs? All speech is demand; it presupposes the Other to whom it is addressed, whose very signifiers it takes over in its formulation. By the same token, that which comes from the Other is treated not so much as a particular satisfaction of a need, but rather as a response to an appeal, a gift, a token of love. There is no adequation between the need and the demand that conveys it; indeed, it is the gap between them that constitutes desire, at once particular like the first and absolute like the second. Desire (fundamentally in the singular) is a perpetual effect of symbolic articulation. It is not an appetite: it is essentially ex-centric and insatiable. That is why Lacan co-ordinates it not with the object that would seem to satisfy it, but with the object that causes it..." [Lacan 1973 (translator's note), p. 279].

Metonymy, metaphor: an example of the manifestation of desire

In "The direction of treatment and the Principles of its Power" the relation of desire and demand is further explained by Lacan. Demand in its oldest form, says Lacan, produces the primary identification with the mother, brought about by her omnipotence, "the identification that not only suspends the satisfaction of needs from the signifying apparatus, but also that which fragments them, filters them, models them upon the defiles of the structure of the signifier" [Lacan 1961, p. 255]. Caught in the network of the signifier the *want-to-be* is expressed in the form of 'want-to-be-the-phallus-of-the-mother'. It is again the loss of object of this and the primordial lack

that will keep up desire and will establish the phallus in the position of the privileged signifier. Lacan observes: "Desire is that which is manifested in the interval that demand hollows within itself, in as much as the subject, in articulating the signifying chain, brings to light the want-to-be, together with the appeal to receive the complement from the Other, if the Other, the locus of speech, is also the locus of this want, or lack...it is also what is evoked by any demand beyond the need that is articulated in it, and it is certainly that of which the subject remains all the more deprived to the extent that the need articulated in the demand is satisfied" [Lacan 1961, p. 263].

According to the description of desire by Lacan we understand that it is inaccurate to talk of the satisfaction of desire- in the singular. Desire is expressed and its satisfaction is indirect. We could say that desire is essentially satisfied by being always expressed and by always proceeding (for the unconscious) into language. This brings us to the more practical aspect of the psychoanalytic usage of language and in order to understand how language conveys desire we need to take a small step back, to the Freudian mechanisms of *condensation* and *displacement* which in Lacanian terminology are assimilated into *metonymy* and *metaphor*. "metaphor is based upon relations of similarity between terms and metonymy upon relations of contiguity [Lemaire 1970, p. 33]. The classical example for metaphor is a line from Victor Hugo's poem *Booz Endormi*:

'Sa gerbe n'était point avare ni haineuse' ('His sheaf was not miserly or spiteful')

for which Lemaire comments: "The signification generated by the metaphor is that of an advent to paternity, that of fertility. If a spark of fertility springs from the heteroclitc arrangement of the terms: gerbe, haine, avare, it is because gerbe, the flower of summer, is associated by similarity with phallus, a symbol of fertility- or even with its outline- and with love and generosity. One could certainly - and correctly- say that phallus and gerbe are metonymically connected with father (the part from the whole) but the existence of some metonymic connections within the 'vertical' associations in no way contradicts linguistic thought, so long as one remains within the same register of thought" (ibid).

Metonymy is defined by the following example: 'have a cup' (container for content): "The substitution here is made because of the relation between the tea one drinks and

the cup containing it. The contiguity expresses the leap, the displacement from register of thought to a neighbouring register" (ibid).

In 'The instant of the letter' Lacan returns to the horizontal and vertical dimension of language in order to introduce metonymy and metaphor (explained shortly): "we have shown the effects not only of the elements of the horizontal signifying chain, but also of its vertical dependencies in the signified, divided into two fundamental structures called *metonymy* and *metaphor*.

We can symbolise them by, first:

$$f(S..S)S \cong \mathfrak{A}(-)s$$

that is to say, the metonymic structure, indicating that it is the connection between signifier and signifier that permits the elision in which the signifier installs the lack-of-being in the object relation, using the value of 'reference back' possessed by signification in order to invest it with the desire aimed at the very lack it supports. The sign - placed between () represents here the maintenance of the bar - which, in the original algorithm, marked the irreducibility in which, in relations between signifier and signified, the resistance of signification is constituted.

Secondly

$$f\left(\frac{S}{S}\right)S \cong \mathfrak{A}(+)s$$

the metaphoric structure indicating that it is in the substitution of signifier for signifier that the effect of signification is produced that is creative or poetic, in other words, which is the advent of the signification in question. The sign + between () represents here the crossing of the bar - and the constitutive value of the crossing for the emergence of signification" [Lacan 1957, p. 164].

Wilden explains the two terms by referring to Freud. He notes that Lacan replaces the Saussurean algorithm with his own formulations in order to fit the psychoanalytic repression, condensation and displacement of signifiers (Vortellungen) into the linguistic diacritical theory of meaning.

Metonymy and metaphor correspond to displacement and substitution. Thus, metonymy is displacement from signifier to signifier, but since the original term, which is latent, remains unexplained, it corresponds to the censorship's seeking to escape the significant term by calling up another contiguous to it (for instance, in one

of Freud's classical cases, 'Wespe' (wasp) was a distortion for SP, the patient's initials). The meaning or significance of the original term (unconscious) is still to be discovered; hence the retention of the bar. Moreover metonymy, by displacement of the 'real' object of the subject's desire onto something apparently insignificant, represents the *manque d'être* (lack of being) which is constituent of desire itself...In this way need becomes (unconscious) desire by 'passing through the defiles of the signifier' and becomes manifest as (conscious) demand.

The metaphorical structure works differently. As a substitution the S' accounts for the 'passage of the signifier into the signified- that is, it accounts for the repression of the particular signifier, S. The patent or manifest term represents the (distorted) 'return of the repressed' (the symptom), equivalent in everyday way to the mechanism involved in the poetic metaphor, where it is what is not said that gives the metaphor its evocative power. This crossing of the bar is constitutive of the emergence of 'signification' [Wilden 1968, p. 242-3].

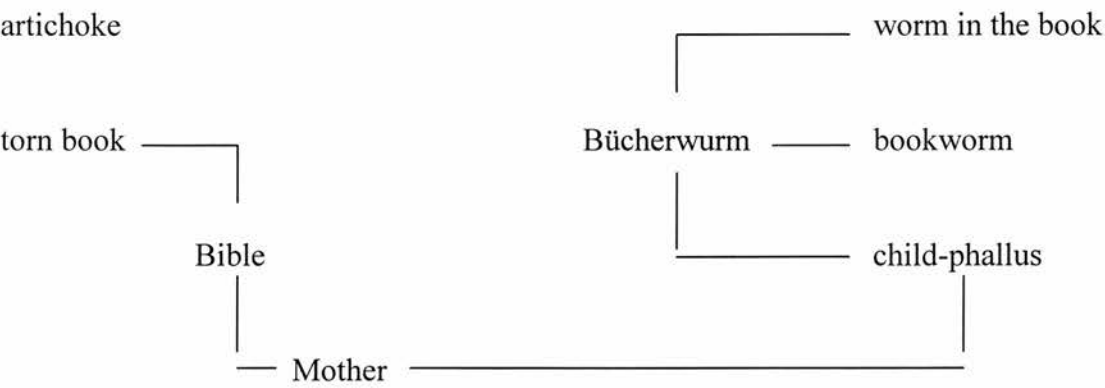
Let us follow the metonymic course of desire to that elusive past via another example from Freud. It is the dream of *the botanical monograph* discussed by Lemaire. Freud says:

"I had written a monograph on a certain plant. The book lay before me and I was at the moment turning over a folded coloured plate. Bound up in each copy there was a dried specimen of the plant, as though it had been taken from a herbarium" [Freud 1900, p. 254].

By his own associations Freud links the dream to certain elements of the previous day and from that he retrieves the memory of having seen a monograph on cyclamens, his wife's favourite flower. The associations now become interesting: Freud reproaches himself for forgetting to buy his wife her favourite flowers while she had cooked artichokes for him, his favourite dish. Artichokes and pulling them apart leaf by leaf in order to eat them brings up the memory from childhood of Freud and his sister tearing up a coloured book with infinite joy. When the associations deriving from the particular trend stop Freud turns to another manifest element of the dream, the 'herbarium', which brings up a memory from adolescence, the headmaster of his school having assigned the senior students the task of clearing the herbarium of little worms (*Bücherwurm*: bookworms) that had found their way into it. Another memory

follows: "of the day when Freud's father gave him his Bible, the thing he held dearest to him in the world, 'except his spouse'...Freud hurriedly devoured it, rather as a bookworm would do" [Lemaire 1970, p. 172]. The ideas are put together in the following way: "It becomes clear that in Freud's unconscious, his father's gift of the Bible was interpreted as being the gift of his wife. Freud assimilates his mother to the Book, and hence to all books. The Bücherwurm is Freud himself, with his passionate interest in books (since the tearing of the book); as a fertile discoverer he devours them, tears them apart and violates them...The unconscious wish to commit incest (to be a passionate discoverer of his mother) is sublimated, thanks to the gift of the Bible and the scene of tearing up the book, into a passion for reading and scientific discovery. This is the wish satisfied by the dream, since the dream shows Freud to be the author of a monograph, but we have shown the unconscious detours through which a more primitive wish comes to light at the same time in this dream" [Lemaire 1970, p. 173]. A network of signifiers can be reconstituted (ibid):

cyclamen



From a Lacanian point of view this example shows the alienation of desire in language as it 'travels' from signifier to signifier and is diverted to eternal sublimations, the desire to make fertile discoveries and to write books [Lemaire 1970, p. 196]. It always evokes that distant desire of the mother, more accurately the desire to be what she lacks, the phallus. Lemaire commends: "Articulated with signifiers, expressed in words, the desire can never be satisfied since, beneath this significant articulation, there still remains the primal need which aims at fusion with the mother.

Having been caught in the signifier by the paternal metaphor (the interdiction evoked by the Bible), this need can aim at satisfaction only by following the signifying 'concatenation'. It thus becomes metonymic, a reflection, that is, of itself and it is, therefore, always elsewhere, eternally straining after a more adequate substitute for the lost object" [Lemaire 1970, p. 196].

Freud spoke of the unconscious, condensation and displacement, the Oedipus complex and the mechanism of repression. Lacan introduced the theory of language into the field of psychoanalysis, said that the unconscious is structured like a language, and promoted the figures of speech, metonymy and metaphor in particular, into main tools of analysis. With Lacan language is everything and everything is language, questions and answers are formulated in it.

PART 2 SCENE ONE: A BEGINNING

Scene one is the *mother* of all scenes. It is formative in many ways. The 'character' is shaped here, out of questions like: 'who am I?', 'what does my desire mean to you?' and the replies elicited from the other. It resembles the genesis of the unconscious not-out-of- oneness and unity³⁰ and, like the unconscious, it receives the mark of the phallus, the signifier of an unfinished adventure in which the drama of human desire is briefly (unceremoniously) condensed. The important point is that the adventure receives the blessing of the signifier. In the place of ignorance, the total ignorance of facts and identity, the stagnation of no-knowledge, no-idea, no-progress rises the urgency of the traumatic encounter, the unbelievable blasphemous news and the strangeness of its implications. Desire begins to move again. It is engendered and set in motion by the same power that tears it apart and threatens to destroy it. It springs out of the crack-in-the-wall of the god's perfection and self-sufficiency and demands the death of the subject who always eternally anticipates that very moment, when he will be finally asked to sacrifice his life and prove his devotion.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part we will discuss the key issues of Scene One from the point of view of the *unconscious* and the *return of the repressed*. First, we will discuss Ion's self-introduction, his morning song (ll. 82-183); second, the meeting with Creusa, up to the point she tells him the secret of the rape; third, the last moments of the meeting and the failure of communication due to the news.

In the second part we will discuss the consequences of Ion and Creusa's first meeting in terms of *desire* and the *Other* and we will examine the future implications of the news of the rape on Ion. We will argue that the misunderstanding of the father's desire and the enmity that develops between Ion and Creusa have their roots in the refusal to accept the news of the rape as true.

³⁰ See last footnote.



Ion's Morning Song and the first Meeting with Creusa

Self introduction

We will be looking into Ion's self-presentation from two perspectives. The first deals with the terms in which he describes himself, the words of his presentation and their significance. The second deals with the effect of his speech, what it stands for and what it reveals as a complete piece of spoken discourse addressed 'to whom it may concern'.

Ion's self introduction is a mixture of self-aggrandisement and degradation³¹. One moment he is the happy son of Apollo (l. 136), the next he is a nameless servant (53/102, 51/131, 135).

"I have no father or mother; / All I would owe to them I give to Apollo's temple / which nursed my orphaned childhood" (l.110-11) and also:

"Slave to no mortal master, / But an eternal god, I am exalted, / Toil without weariness in praise and prayer" (l. 130-5) and also:

"I am Apollo's servant and he is my protector; / Then I will do his bidding/ And never cease to serve him" (l. 182-3)³².

The eager servant defines his existence through his labour. His name is his labour. His gratitude is his labour. His reward is his labour.

Submission and withdrawal before the father/god motivates his behaviour to others as well. He addresses the other servants with a series of imperatives, playing furtively with the authority inspired by the father:

³¹Hamilton [1985] considers Ion a priest of Apollo but also draws attention to the conflict between the exalted official position and the menial tasks he performs (p. 58). He also highlights the difference between a personal and a popular piety (p. 72) which is, I believe, particularly relevant to our case.

deGrummond [1983] highlights Euripides' interest in psychological (rather than physical realism) and shows (in the case of *Heracles*) how the opening lines of the main character or hero set the psychological 'key' more or less and predisposes the audience for what is to follow by utilising the 'subjective' aspects of reality.

³² All translations in this Thesis are by Vellacott [1954] unless otherwise indicated.

"Go to the Castallian spring; / wash in its silvery eddies, / and return cleansed to the temple. / Guard your lips from offence"

He threatens the birds that fly over the temple by exhibiting the weapons of the god, the bow and the arrows:

"Keep clear of the temple walls and the roof, / ... take care I will shoot (again).../ if you will not obey me, / The sweet notes of your song will drown in blood...there must be no uncleanness here" (l. 155 - 179).

The daily tasks are carried out with excessive zeal. Beyond responsibility these imperatives generate his own obsession with cleanliness and purity. They are all devoted to the father and represent what Ion is always talking about, endless devotion in words and acts. Submission opens and ends his speech, as Ion celebrates the unique privilege of being a slave to Apollo.

The servant's gratitude to the master goes together with silence, ignorance of identity, namelessness and a general fear for blasphemy and pollution. In Ion's presentation the temple appears to be not just a pure shrine but a sanitised environment that reflects its purity back to its residents, and for this reason the sudden outburst of aggression against the birds seems incongruous and exaggerated. Looking at the whole song we notice that the three themes, the glory of Apollo and his shrine, Ion's namelessness and the return of the birds are repeated again and again. It appears that purity separates 'the inside' from 'the outside'. 'Inside' is the familiar surroundings of the temple, the repeated morning ritual, the self-guarded cleanliness, the continuous attempt to be pure. The world 'outside' the temple frustrates this attempt and preserves it at the same time. Ion cannot control what comes from outside but in focusing his attention on that, he misses the significance of what passes his lips unguarded.

Let us examine the movement of Ion's speech and the vocabulary of his self-presentation.

There are two main poles of attraction or interest. The first is his relation to Apollo, the second is sexuality.

Apollo is the Father who wants nothing, and lacks nothing. To Ion he is not just master-Apollo but a figure comparable to the father of the early oedipal stage. He is the object of love and the source of identification. But the relationship is strange and

unilateral. Being larger than life, with no desires and no demands, no imperfections and no rivals, this distant father shows no interest in Ion who is reduced to repeating his own offer of love and devotion for ever. Considered as a series of isolated words, Ion's vocabulary expresses his total devotion. The effect of the speech, if taken as an attempt to say 'something' that goes beyond devotion, reveals the opposite, an aggressive almost self-destructive disposition and an absolute frustration.

Ion says: "ὥς γὰρ ἀμῆτωρ ἀπάτωρ τε γεγὼς τοὺς θρέψαντας Φοῖβου ναοὺς θεραπεύω"
[I have no mother or father; All I would owe to them I give to Apollo's temple, which nursed my orphan childhood]. (l. 109-11).

Next, he begins to praise Apollo's laurel, the god's symbol and the material of his broom³³ (l. 112-25). Praise of laurel, the plant of Apollo and the material of his broom. It cleans the floors of the temple and grows in immortal gardens watered by everlasting water. Ion uses that laurel to clean every single day.

The obsession with the ritual reveals its causes. Ion identifies with the laurel because it is the god's plant. Ion is the laurel, the material his broom is made of. He is one of the symbols Apollo is associated with. He offers himself as a love-able object to the father. Beyond that, he joins the namelessness of slavery with the immortality of the symbol-laurel and escapes the embarrassment of his status by locating himself in the timeless repetition of the daily duties. The 'laurel' is the knot-signifier of an undetermined signification, one in which Ion tries to locate himself not in terms of illegitimacy but in terms of being special. The laurel is the difficult signifier³⁴ of his purity and his privilege, what he would rather be in order not to be called an

³³ Vellacott's translation is very 'vivid': "Come, little broom, of fresh and lovely leaves / Gathered from the immortal laurel-groves / Sacred foliage fed by unfailing waters / That gush from myrtle-thickets-come my broom / Used for Apollo's sacred hearth within..... this ritual task I offer to Apollo....blessed be thy name, Apollo" (l. 112-25). In the text we represent some of the possible meanings of the laurel-symbol in his speech.

³⁴ The laurel is a 'difficult' signifier, a dense symbol: of the woman, Daphne, who defended her purity, of the uncontrollable lust of Apollo, of Ion's own mark of excellence, of his desire to be something even if that implies his death and his turning into a wooden object - to mention but a few of the functions of an 'eternal' symbol.

illegitimate nobody. Whether Apollo replies or even notices the little game is irrelevant. The essential thing is that Ion invents a signification in which he participates with an exceptional role.

In the lines following the laurel-praise Ion presents himself as the son of Apollo (l. 128-40). This should be a wonderful example of tragic irony for all those who know that he is, indeed, the son of Apollo. From a psychoanalytic point of view this shows how imperative desire is: it remains attached to the object that sustains it, even if it only means that it will be disappointed again and again.

Praise of Apollo / blessed is my toil / better a servant to a god than to a mortal (l. 131-3). The unexpressed idea of any family relation is renounced and repressed; the success of repression allows the idea to return as an innocent joke; the attachment to Apollo is preferable to any other family:

I will not cease to serve you / I call Apollo 'my father'- good for me (l. 135-6)

Different translations have been suggested for the line³⁵:

'the name of Phoebus, lord of the temple, that brings blessing to me, I call by the name Father' or

'the bounty of Phoebus I call by the name of Father' or

'the name of Father, which is serviceable (ὠφέλιμον) to me, that of Phoebus, the god of this temple, I repeat' (p. 79).

It is possible that Ion offers his services in exchange for using Apollo's name. It is possible that the name 'father' disguises sexual attachment, or even that Ion knows full well that he only 'plays' with the name of father as he plays with the bows and arrows that he is unable to use. The word ὠφέλιμον (useful) suggests a practical aspect. It seems to subtract something from Ion's romanticism. It seems to voice a demand for a better life which is not entirely covered by the eager submission to the non-desire of the self-sufficient god.

In all cases, presenting himself first as parentless, then as a love object (laurel) and then imagining himself to be the son of Apollo, Ion shows that his dependence on the god involves him in more than one way. I would suggest that the power of the line lies in the obscurity of meaning which oscillates between the useful and the gratificatory /

³⁵ See Owen [1939, p. 79] for a discussion of the three translations.

playful usage of the name. The oscillation between usefulness and gratification, again, reveals the lack of real support, the need for continuous motivation and the awkwardness of the situation. Ion is under constant pressure (by himself) to keep proving and justifying his existence by his labour, always careful of his own spoken next line, fending off the danger of blasphemies, blurring the line between a demand for recognition and an 'innocent' figure of speech.

Sexuality, the other interest, returns from outside. It emerges as Ion suspends the chant to Apollo and his attention is drawn by the birds flying over the temple. Gradually the speech builds up into a display of aggression against the uncontrollable birds.

In lines 145- 184 Ion's interest is diverted from the theme of purity: he states his intention to fetch water from the spring. He suspends this task in order to scare away the birds. He threatens to kill them and, addressing the birds, tells them to go away and mind their children or procreate. Then he is overcome by shame for thinking about killing the birds because they are Zeus's messengers.³⁶

Sexuality and uncleanness come together. While Ion avoids miasma by not killing the birds, he is already excited enough to become aggressive and betray the upset caused by any mention of sexuality. This outburst of emotion is better appreciated against the background of the previous part, the play of words about Apollo's paternity, from where excitement lingers on. The hidden thoughts escape his guard. The father-son dyad re-emerges but it is now sneered at in the form of the birds. Ion unwittingly exposes himself to the impurities he so carefully tries to avoid. In the middle of shouting out his purity and renouncing sexual thoughts they come back to him, from outside, from somewhere else, from his own rhythm and vocabulary that is only meant to keep them away.

The birds must go away to mind their offspring (or to 'procreate') he says. But, then, metaphorically speaking, he must clean their mess and fall from grace. The responsible-for-purity son of Apollo is swiftly transformed to the nameless servant

who cleans bird droppings. The pressure of reality cuts short the exaltation of the morning song which turns into an aggressive, embarrassing, *self-punishing* display of disappointment for the impure thoughts. The loss of control in the chant is reflected in the content of the last part: uncontrollable sexuality, dirt, parentlessness. This return of the repressed and the mounting of repression at the same time 'impregnate' Ion's speech with half-concealed blasphemies making him all the more cautious and all the more obsessed with cleanliness and purity, the somatic aspect of which is just the representative of the corresponding intellectual virtue in which he constantly fails.

At the opening scene Ion introduces himself with some very controversial characteristics. He literally has to invent his self-presentation since he cannot expect the usual support from a socially established 'I'. Ion's itinerary in words starts with a complete effacement and dislocation and ignorance of identity. His speech is punctuated by the repetition of the words 'pain' and 'labour'. It is full of declarations of eager submission, gratitude and joy and playful assumptions of the Name of the Father. It is a song of happiness and purity, order and cleanliness and ritual propriety which 'flows' with the sincerity of Ion's exaltation.

Between the lines it is an altogether different story. There he loses the thread of his thoughts and the speech is distracted by the arrival of birds, by the duties of the day and by the frequent returns of un-expressed desires. There Ion falls victim to his own eagerness. He stirs his song towards impure subjects which he hardly manages to suppress. He wants to be a servant, then more than a servant, then a servant again. He wants to be the indispensable object-symbol of purity and he wants to be the son of Apollo. He renounces the uncontrollable sexuality responsible for his existence³⁷ and he degrades the function of procreation into an impure characteristic of the animal kingdom. Swallowed up in hasty silence, suspended in badly concealed protests of innocence, the desire to be necessary is annihilated by the absolute self-sufficiency of

³⁶ Owen [1939, p. 81] draws our attention to the fact that all the birds mentioned are symbols of gods, notably Apollo and his father Zeus, and also that Ion does not care whether they drop dirt at other temples, not even at Apollo's birthplace at Delos, so long as they stay away from Delphi.

³⁷ Ion does not know his parents. In his discussion with Creusa he says that he is perhaps the product of 'injustice' or error (l. 325) of uncontrollable sexuality in our vocabulary.

the father. Ion is no one as no one needs him. He is everyone as the order of the world needs him.

The idiosyncratic relation to Apollo emerges from the progress of his speech. From the psychoanalytic point of view Ion is at the cross-roads of structural change (approaching maturity), but for the moment all the major concerns of his existence, are condensed in one person: the father god. There is no other referent (no mother) in the introductory monologue. Ion wants to be loved by the father and timidly tries to identify with him (using his name and weapons). But Apollo is an unusual love-object and an impossible-to-imitate figure. And if maturity implies relinquishing the love object of the past then we might ask: how can one relinquish what one never had? How can the Oedipus complex or any similar structure ever set desire in motion when the Father has crushed the narcissism of the child by completely ignoring it? Ion is left to identify not with a characteristic of the father but only with objects of his cult (laurel and weapons) thus returning for ever to the point of departure, of offering himself as a love-object to his indifference. He has discovered his desire in the desire of the Other but the Other desires nothing. And instead of seeing his desire vanishing he performs his own self-effacement: I do not desire, I am pure. His narcissism, for we have to assume some sort of ego-supporting shred of narcissism, is only sustained by a feeble unrecognised desire: to see a crack of imperfection in the absolute splendour of the sun-god, to be more than meets the eye.

Crushed under the omnipotence and omni-indifference of the father³⁸ Ion tries to map his desire as devotion to someone who may not even notice it, hence coming up against his own privation / objectlessness and the need to renew his faith non stop. The father is an object of both life-supporting and sexual significance. From this point of view Ion is still in the pregenital early phase of mixed ego and sexual aims. He supports his desire in relation to this multivalent object by sustaining identity, love and symbolic position- the main topics of interest. He then renounces them all in form and starts from the beginning. The fear lurking behind his words is a fear of division.

The scenario of Apollo's paternity mixed with the erotic elements of devotion, 'mad' but lived, locate Ion in a precariously pure state, which, despite its anxieties, allows him to assume an identity in place of the missing one. In the pure environment of the shrine, uncontrolled sexuality, the twin of namelessness, is systematically ignored and the effort is concentrated on maintaining that fragile balance. Purity avoids discussing its disgraces, excrement and sexuality, avoids asking questions, knowing, inquiring and generally disturbing the present eternal order. But purity can only be sustained in a mythical world.

Interpersonal relations

In psychoanalysis the desire of the mother forms the child's desire. Ion and Creusa form each other's desire from the beginning³⁹ of the play. An identification and solidarity are established immediately, based both on the unusual topics and the style of their discourse. Also responsible for this early identification is Apollo's strangeness and indifference which remain unexpressed in the background.

We can divide the dialogue into two parts: in the first (lines 238-329 discussed in this section) we examine Ion and Creusa's solidarity-in-suffering. In the second (lines 330-400 discussed in the next part) we look into the effect of the unexpected news of the rape.

The two parts together resemble the structure of the monologue, rising tension, the return of the repressed and simultaneously the return of repression.

In this section we will discuss Ion and Creusa's first meeting, its content and significance. We will apply the same principles, that is, look into *what* is said and *how* it is said. We will also examine the significance of their first meeting for the economy

³⁸ The importance of the larger-than-life father is explained by Lacan in the discussion of Schreber's case [Lacan 1959, pp. 199-221]. It is to the benefit of Creusa and Ion that the paternal figure, even that of Apollo and Erectheus, not just Xuthus, is somewhat 'denigrated' in the end.

³⁹ Conacher [1967, p. 268] speaks of the "unconscious" affinity between Ion and Creusa but does not explain what he means. Wolff [1965, p. 170] also speaks on an unconscious sympathy between them.

of desire which now finds the crack of imperfection that will set it in motion-imperfect though it will be.

Four major elements stand out in this part: the discovery of 'beyond what meets the eye', the mythical story of curiosity and punishment, the reproduction of ignorance and the impossibility of ever finding what one looks for, the object of one's desire.

Nothing would have happened had it not been for Creusa's tears. They suggest a lack which will not be adequately accounted for in the process of the discourse. And although her own family history and present childlessness would justify her sorrow, the old memory (l. 250) responsible for the tears instigates Ion's curiosity till the moment it is transformed into 'the other's desire' literally, the other woman's desire for whom Creusa visits the temple secretly.

The excited curiosity fuels a symmetrical (imaginary) discourse of questions and answers. Ion asks a series of questions to which he seems to know the answers already. Then Creusa asks her questions and Ion is unable to answer. The dialogue is kept at an invariable line-for-line exchange, which seems to establish a rhythm, a lulling repetition. Questions are asked and dropped before receiving a proper answer, indicating that the focus is not so much on receiving information but on reinforcing already established views on happiness and identity.

For Ion anyone who can answer: *"Who are you? Where do you come from, and what is your family? What name may I call you?"* (l. 228-9) ought to be happy. Under the influence of his thoughts and his preoccupation with the questions⁴⁰ of identity he ignores Creusa's remark that family and good name did not make her happy: *"thus far I am fortunate"* she says (l. 264). Instead of paying attention to that, Ion will embark on exploring, not to say experiencing, Creusa's *good fortune* by making her repeat the facts he already knows. The effect of his inquiry will be uncanny- in the psychoanalytic sense of the word⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Walsh [1978, p. 302] notes Ion's inclination to link happiness with status and birth. Further on he claims that despite being ignorant of the noble birth he *unconsciously* shows his nobility" (p. 304) but does not explain how this is done.

⁴¹ In 'The Uncanny' [1919, p. 370] Freud related the feeling of uneasiness (uncanny) with the return of something familiar that has been repressed. In our case it is not so much Ion's knowledge about Athens

Ion asks: "...your father's ancestor sprung from the earth?" (l. 267). Creusa insists: "My descent from him has not helped me" (l. 268).

Instead of appeasing his curiosity her enigmatic answers make it stronger. Although they talk to each other, Ion is continuously ignored by being given elusive answers. Just like the indifferent Apollo, Creusa reproduces his slave-status by extending his ignorance and sustaining his dependence. The game of questions and answers, however, is kept up because neither complies 'to the point' of the other's demand: Ion does not stop asking relentless questions and Creusa neither refuses to reply nor provides clear answers. An impression that there is something *more than meets the eye* is created.

Curiosity feeds on itself, sustains itself by asking non-stop and remaining unsatisfied but for the certainty that the other knows more than he is eager to reveal. The desire to know figures undisguised as intellectual curiosity. It concerns something 'innocent', a myth or a story, not sexuality anyway. But it asks for information that it already has, aiming not at receiving it exactly but at gaining access to the truth of the Other which eludes even the most successful spot-on questions. This desire to know about the Other's desire is indirectly answered from within the myth of Creusa's family. It is a story of death, sexuality and curiosity which ought to deter him or anyone from asking any further questions.⁴²

Ion is told that the guardians of Erichthonius, the daughters of Cecrops, were punished for their curiosity and for disobeying Athena's order not to open the box in which Erichthonius was growing. This is a story of blood with the obvious threat that anyone who gains access to the secrets of procreation is punished with death. Sexual knowledge is here represented by the desire to see the contents of the box. To want to open this Pandora's box does nothing less than mark mankind with the results of curiosity and the eagerness to satisfy desire despite death.

and Creusa's family story that impresses her but the sequence of the questions that 'scan' her life with a near- chronological order.

⁴² The desire would be satisfied indirectly by the prohibition and warning contained in the story: anyone who gets curious about such matters is punished with death. Normally, the threat of castration would be enough to dissuade the child/Ion from asking more questions and would redirect his sexual interests to other causes.

Ion is not deterred. He ignores or misses the significance of the warning and proceeds: He asks about Creusa's own father: *"Is it true, or merely a tale, that your father Erechtheus killed you all?"* (l. 277), *"And how did you escape their fate?"* (l. 279) to which Creusa answers that he had to do it and that she survived because she was a baby in her mother's arms. While the daughters of Cecrops are punished for curiosity, the daughters of Erechtheus are sacrificed to save their city. In the family history the violence of punishment precedes voluntary sacrifice. The transformation occurring within the span of a generation leaves Creusa suspended between the punishment and the consent of the females of her line, two layers of 'history' tied up with the obligation of death.

The story continues: Erechtheus is swallowed by the Earth for killing a son of Poseidon [Owen 1939, p. 93]. The king is buried near the grottoes of Apollo and Dionysus. This suspends Creusa's duty to be like the females of her line and preserves her sacrifice for another occasion. She is the last woman of her line.

A new line of questions is pursued. It concerns Apollo. On asking Creusa whether the god is worshipped there, he receives an enigmatic reply: *"It is nothing. The caves there hold a certain shameful secret that I know of"* (l. 288). Nothing more is said and Ion appears to drop the issue, which again ties the answer to Creusa's secrecy.

A new set of questions begins. Who is your (Athenian) husband? Ion learns that the husband is not Athenian but nevertheless noble, a descendant of Zeus, and the reason he got Creusa as his wife is because she was given to him by their city as a reward for helping them against the Euboians. The last daughter of Erechtheus, who had survived, sacrificed herself in a different way to save her city, she married a non Athenian. All males are associated with death. All women's lot involves a sacrifice.

A new set of questions begins: why are you here, are you both for the same reason? To which Creusa answers *"we have no children"*. Then we have the following lines:

"You mean that you never bore a child all your life? / Never any child - Apollo knows how true this is" (l. 305 -6). Again Creusa is placed at a (socio-cultural) dead end: of the unfulfilled traditional feminine role.

Ion locates Creusa at the end of all the converging lines of his inquiries. She is the missing element, a lack, the last in line, the key to all the previous lines and a

paradoxical presence. She is the queen of Athens, the child, the daughter and the wife, the knot of all traces, with which he is fascinated: "*who is that woman?*" he will later wonder. She becomes the object of his newly found desire and a near-mirror of himself. She is like him and yet different. He can identify with her 'likeness', he can respond to her familiar lack (childlessness). Ion is like the child who senses the lack of the phallus in the mother and offers himself as the phallus, identifies with the imaginary complement of her lack and shapes his existence around this fundamental alienation.

But we must not forget that it is Ion who has immobilised Creusa at the meeting point of the past, the present and the future with the content and the style of his questions. Relentless questions referring to men and half answers have made Creusa an evocative, veiled 'nothing' pregnant with meaning.⁴³ As the figure of Apollo momentarily fades into the background, desire emerges with the willingness to help this woman- to serve her perhaps.

Creusa picks up the tension of Ion's discourse and re-directs the *aporia* to its sender. Unable to answer 'who am I?' without referring to a line of losses, she will address the same question to Ion: 'who are you?' Ion, who in the morning song oscillated between

⁴³ Creusa's reduction to 'nothing', to being like Ion, is executed with uncanny precision. Ion reproduces his desire to be absolutely necessary by performing a generation scanning, the backbone of which is the topographical coincidence of the fragmentary information at the gaping mouth of the chasm:

chasm (gap / cave) ---> covers father

chasm ---> covers shame

chasm ---> grotto of Apollo

husband ---> non Athenian, helper, receiver of gift, visitor at Delphi---> *xenos*, spectator, childless, visitor twice to the holy grotto of Trophonios, chasm.

It is the same 'chasm' that appears in his speech and in the abandoned questions supported by the excited sexual curiosity. As for Creusa, Ion's talent to be uncanny on simple questions that concern his own lack of family has already drawn her discourse around the gravitational point of the 'rape' and her own quest of identity, what, strictly speaking, prohibits her from speaking openly. Ion will be exposed to a familiar story with no meaning, one which he has equally created by invoking the veiled answers and easing off the repression of the next piece of speech.

exaltation and aggression, will be unable to respond with anything else but his own *aporia*.

In the second part of the dialogue (l. 306- 329), in front of the other, Ion will have to renounce his high aspirations or his desire to be important or *more than meets the eye*. Creusa asks: "*who are you / your mother is to be envied*" (l. 308) "*were you sold or dedicated by someone / where do you live in here / how old were you when you arrived / who brought you up / how have you been kept all these years / do you know your parents at all?*" And he answers: "*They call me Apollo's slave, my lady, and so I am. / I know nothing except that I am said to belong to Apollo. / I know neither my father nor my mother. / My home is any part of the temple... / I was brought up by Apollo's priestess. I think of her as my mother. / I am the child of some woman who was wronged perhaps. / I am Apollo's slave; these clothes are all his.* (To the question 'why did you not try to find your parents') *I have no evidence at all*" (l. 309-328).

Just as Ion was projecting his own interests in his questions so does Creusa. Ignoring his admissions of ignorance Creusa will ask all the questions - down to the last one - to which Ion cannot provide an answer.

Both of them can do nothing more than reproduce pain and shame because this is the only reality they know. Both appear to speak their mind but the effect is invariably the same. Ion gradually reduces Creusa from noble to childless woman and brings out the fragility of her present position. Creusa reduces Ion from 'child of a proud mother' to servant, to result of sin. The exchange of information degenerates into a gratuitous repetition of 'nothing'. Disguised in sympathy, this unproductive communication states only one thing: ignorance. Imagine them being stuck in an eternal exchange of sympathy and commiserations.

At the moment their discourse is all used up and suspended, Ion and Creusa see their desire retreating further and further away from any form of satisfaction. The vulnerability of both is ascertained along with supremacy of the father. The 'more than meets the eye' is swallowed up in the creation of identical cases of misery, at the end of which no one but the omnipotent father commands all meaning. And as long as he commands meaning and knowledge and truth they can be or have nothing for each other.

Then something unexpected happens. Something completely in line with the laws of signification, the dynamics of repression and the return of the repressed. In place of the discourse of consciousness, of the "I" that suffers from complete ignorance, there returns the repressed *secret* of the Other's desire. It follows naturally from the constraints of their discourse: since they cannot talk about *their* desire they will talk about the desire *of the Other*. The story of the rape is in this sense an account of Apollo's desire together with the frustration caused by his indifference and an attempt to hold on to their own desire which is fading away unsatisfied.

Failure of communication

This is the immediate context in which the return of the repressed erupts. It passes the guard of Creusa's lips with minimum repression; it's not about her, it's about a friend⁴⁴. The return of the repressed is Creusa's secret spelled out, unveiled. The unusual news is contrasted to the rhythmic active / passive sway of the first part and survives being swallowed up by this rhythm because it is too extraordinary, too phallic to be contained.

Speech represents the rape, punishment for present sexual excitation and curiosity. The rape news is the encounter with something unthinkable, it comes from out-of-nowhere and it is a million times more intense than the sexuality suggested by the hovering birds and a million times more polluting than their dirt. It changes reality dramatically, shatters purity and the world of similar pains, shatters the unified universe of no time and eternity into before and after. It creates time.

Ion unwittingly inserts himself into the maze of Creusa's story, promising to help, seeing himself implicated in her childlessness, his parentlessness, Xuthus' descent from Zeus, and all the small details that allow him to identify with the missing child, the missing information and himself as missing / missed. The rekindled curiosity now rushes forth to meet its satisfaction. At last Ion will be told more.

⁴⁴ Standard case of negation cited by Freud [1925, pp. 437-42] is: 'it was not my mother' meaning 'it was my mother'. The negation maintains the minimum repression that allows the signifier to emerge without upsetting 'the order of the world'.

"Ποῖόν, τι χρήζουσ'; ὥς ὑπουργήσω, γύναι" (l. 333) [what is it that you want my lady, I will help you] says Ion, and without knowing he pledges more than his help. Creusa will ask Ion for an impossible favour, to confront Apollo with his sin.

The reply to the appalling 'Apollo has raped a woman', is a fine example of the return of the repressed.

Cre: "Φοίβῳ μιγῆναί φησί τις φίλων ἑμῶν" [Having had sex with Phoebus one of my friends says]

Ion: "Φοίβῳ γυνὴ γεγῶσα; μὴ λέγ', ὦ ξένη!" [With Phoebus, woman having being? You must not say it!] (l. 338-9)

Ion is trapped in a no-win situation. He will either have to confront Apollo with the request or bury it. In both cases, whatever the outcome, he has lost his purity. He now knows something about the Father's sexuality and it is dangerous knowledge, a secret. The danger is reflected in his request to Creusa to abandon her request. The reason is slightly odd and the generalisation too sweeping. The loss of purity supports it:

"οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις σοι προφητεύσει τάδε." [There is no one who will ask (act as go between) this question for you] (l. 369).

Retracting his promise, re-establishing silence and purity, is in effect an effort to repress Creusa's demand. Ion's disbelief threatens to immobilise him in a state of lost purity which he will be trying to recapture ever after. It is in the effort to regain Paradise Lost *immediately* that he will prohibit Creusa from asking. In fact with every new step Ion removes himself further and further from his paradise of innocence. As if it was not enough that he exceeded his duties by posing as the mediator of Apollo, he now speaks in his place.

When Creusa claims that her friend suffered ever since the incident he wonders:

"Suffered? With a god for her lover?" (l.342)

Ion's doubt is not unfounded. In myth it is an honour for a woman to be chosen by a god and the fact is made public right away. But that woman has already kept it *"secret from the father"* (l. 340) - the referent of 'father' left wonderfully vague to accommodate either the father of the child or hers.

The concern for Apollo's involvement in the story is succeeded by questions about the fate of the child:

"Where is he then? Is he alive? / Was there any blood on the ground? / How long is it since the child was lost? / suppose that Apollo took him and brought him up secretly" (ll.345, 351, 353, 357).

Considering the possibility that Apollo took care of the child already means that what the woman says is not at all impossible. This is an implicit answer to the question first raised about Apollo's involvement.

Ion's personal interest is made clear in the following line: *"How sad! what you tell me echoes my own sadness"* (l. 359).

The voice of reason re-institutes repression upon whatever remains of Ion's innocence. In fact it is quite 'charming' to see the child who was sacrificing itself in front of the omni-indifferent father now speak on his behalf.

" Well, do you see that your case is very weak in one point... is Apollo to reveal what he intends should remain a mystery?" (l.363/ 6).

In the end the return of the repressed erupts as irrational fear:

" That is what our folly would amount to, if we try to force a reluctant god to speak, to give signs in sacrifice or in the flight of birds" (l. 371).

The imminent catastrophe is the price of *curiosity*, Ion's weakness. In fact curiosity is traditionally, and in this case too, a feminine 'virtue'. The spectacular return of the repressed in the form of a seemingly innocent weakness is reinforced by the language of the body, in the ample references to seeing what one should not have seen and of knowing what one should not have known (interdiction of knowledge). It is not surprising, therefore, that the reply to rape comes from Ion's own self-defences, imposing an even more impossible task, to inform the god or reverse, undo⁴⁵, what happened. It is easy to see that the answer lies in the direction of the assumption of the punishment as usual, even in the most innocent form, the punishment of the present curiosity.

More remarkable than the loss of innocence is the form of defence against the meaning of the 'rape'. Ion refuses not the event itself but its place in any kind of

⁴⁵ Freud [1926, pp. 274-8] explains that two main modes of symptom formation intent to a) undo what has been done or b) isolate the ugly.

discourse. He banishes the unfit piece of information out of mind and out of spoken language, to the place that can hold it along with similar elements, to the unconscious. The technique-guardian of purity is an old favourite: the sealed lips. Only it arrives too late, after the repressed, the amazing piece of news of uncontrolled sexuality, has broken into conscious discourse. Ion returns Creusa's demand to her: do as I say, obey me, do not ask, drop your demand. In line with the in-action of the entire scene, Ion suggests a course of action the success of which could only be guaranteed by the other's eagerness to renounce his or her own desire.

Alternatively, to satisfy the other's desire means danger for life, death. Once again, Creusa and Ion see their desire go unsatisfied and are told (by each other) to hold on to that. What makes this little sacrifice unsatisfactory this time is not clear. May be it is the 'right time' for change. May be the ways of the past are not efficient any more. May be it is the fact that they have already wasted their only asset, their purity and silence and having been each other's witness makes it difficult to pretend that everything is as it used to be.

Creusa and Ion will develop a unique enmity. Not the mythical rivalry of the mother and the son [Campbell 1956, Jung 1957] but the rivalry of the siblings for the love of the Father. Their struggle will be to death, the same death they refused to serve in the other's demand. Their desire will take the form of a race in time: to reach Apollo before the other. Their futile battle will be to declare their innocence, the one just lost, to the entire world since they cannot declare it to each other. Both Creusa and Ion will be trying to find witnesses to their purity and to their affliction and in order to succeed in that they will even accept the difficult task of serving other, more dangerous desires.

The disastrous first meeting is suspended by the arrival of another Father, Xuthus. External constraints impose the silence they did not manage to uphold. The entire first scene is suppressed⁴⁶.

We examined the first scene in terms of a fundamental unconscious characteristic, the return of the repressed and the repression. In the first part, Ion's self presentation, the

⁴⁶ 'Suppressed': removed from consciousness and unresolved.

return of the repressed reveals its sexual nature. The declaration of purity serves the purposes of repression. In the second part, Creusa and Ion's early solidarity the return of the repressed underlines Ion's uncanny questions and the upsurge of the sense of loss in both interlocutors. In the third part, a consequence of the disappointment and the failure of the previous one, the repressed returns in the form of unexpected traumatic news.

The first scene establishes the problem of identity and being, Ion and Creusa's inability to claim their rightful place in society (nameless slave, childless woman) and, more importantly, to claim their own desire. Unable to express clearly what they want they are condemned to seeing their desire- and the key to it- alienated, locked away, in Apollo's silence. Together they briefly create a desire for each other which is swiftly swallowed up by their ignorance and the fact that they recognise the Other (Apollo or Father) as the only one capable of satisfying it. Thus desire is eternally suspended, waiting for the favour of the Father, the refused love and the acknowledgement of the child as worthy receiver of that gift.

DISCUSSION: AN EXPLORATION OF THE OTHER'S DESIRE

How does one represent confusion? The confusion of desire that goes unnoticed in the ideal sanctuary, Delphi, but shows itself as soon as it comes in contact with real people? We shall try to describe it verbally, by exposing the consequences of the time after the news of the rape.

The rape destroys the little boy's ideal of the perfect father, hence it is bound to cause an aggressive reaction. It is a very special signifier holding together sexuality and aggressiveness. It does not fit in the environment of ignorance and as such it is a 'wrong answer' to the half-formed early questions that concern sexuality. It is a catalyst-signifier in the economy of desire and produces its effects from the margins of the symbolise-able and represent-able; the 'rape' can never be talked about or its news circulated or acknowledged as a form of sexuality. It hits the meaningless questions and answers, Ion and Creusa's ignorance and aporia, it stops the exalted *I am nothing/ I am everything* and forces the question of the Other's desire to the foreground. It comes from the other's (interlocutor's) verbal demand: do something for me, help me.

Creusa's demand speaks itself. It 'radiates' desire to be received by the other along the lines of: *she says that but what does she want from me?* It tells Creusa's truth: for her, sexuality is an ugly experience of forced maturity. She may not say it in so many words but she achieves the effect of it in a perfect way.

To Ion, the rape signifies the castration he would never admit⁴⁷. It is reinforced by other evidence of paternal cruelty. It is the same castration, threat and warning, that he encountered in Creusa's family history. Women do not have a phallus because they are punished. They are punished with death for their curiosity. As act of violence the rape 'makes sense' in a context of violence.

Ideally, the subject's recognition of castration in himself works in a 'normalising' way. That's what the oedipus complex is about. The sexuality of the parents gradually

⁴⁷ Lacan argues that the neurotic knows that he is castrated but refuses to admit it [Lacan 1960, p. 323].

becomes a matter of indifference. But in this play it is too early for that while the indifference of the parents is still the burning issue. In the place of the big renunciation of the parents' sexuality that would put the subject's desire under a more plausible perspective, there appears the most ambitious of all tasks: the adventure of saving the god's honour. What *ought to be done* conceals *what one wants*. An imaginary identification with a slight lack in the sufficient father suddenly creates a purposeful future out of a timeless present. According to Ion's own interpretation of the events, the matter of Creusa's accusation needs to be settled. This will be his guide and his 'mission'. The desire to inform the god about what happens, is formed under the pressure of his compulsive purity and namelessness. In his morning song, Ion had presented himself as nothing less than the regulator of the order of the world and nothing more than a nameless servant. Under the present circumstances he seizes the opportunity to approach Apollo *as someone else*: as the representative who has spoken on his behalf. This slight displacement of role and identity creates a certain sense of purpose which is, strictly speaking, irrelevant to what Apollo wants. It depends on what Ion *thinks* Apollo wants which, again, depends on his conception of identity and desire. So long as Ion *assumes* that the other wants something, so long as he *assumes* a role in order to respond to that need, he is condemned to repeating the sequence of events that led to the present⁴⁸. Let us not forget that it was Ion's eagerness to help Creusa, even before knowing what he would be helping her with, that created the confusion.

The question 'What does the Other want?' is not easy to answer. As we will later see, in psychoanalytic terms it leads straight back to 'What do I want?', to the subject itself. As long as it remains unanswered, this question creates paradoxes and contradictions that, in our case, only reproduce the gap between the *before* and the *after the news* or between the innocence of repressed sexuality and the polluting knowledge of the return of the repressed. In fact, refusing to address this important issue, the subject

⁴⁸ Consider Ion's devotion in terms of the traditional version: the child 'senses' a lack in the mother and tries to be the phallus of this lack; here, Ion senses a lack in the father.

will be trapped in an endless repetition of the refusal and will be encountering situations in which he has no choice but to participate despite himself⁴⁹.

We will now introduce some of the difficulties encountered by Ion (and Creusa) in relation to that unresolved situation. They all reflect the fragmentation of the unified innocent world in thought and in language.

Speaking of a child 'out in the wider world' and Apollo's gratuitous sexuality, Creusa causes Ion's strong reaction not because his sense of propriety is offended but because what she says comes dangerously close to his own half-formed ideas of uncontrollable sexuality and paternal indifference. Creusa, too, is uncannily precise because in her speech she only represents her own *aporias* and nothing more. The effect of the news on Ion exposes exactly what does not work, the paternal metaphor, the Name of the Father:

"πῶς οὖν δίκαιον τοὺς νόμους ὑμᾶς βροτοῖς / γράψαντας, αὐτοὺς ἀνομίαν
βοηθῆσθαι;/ εἰ δ' οὐ γὰρ ἔσται, τῷ λόγῳ δὲ χρῆσθαι / δίκας βιαιῶν δώσετ'
ἀνθρώποις γάμων, / σὺ καὶ Ποσειδῶν Ζεὺς θ' ὅς σφ' οὐρανοῦ κρατεῖ, / ναοὺς τίνοντες
ἀδικίας κενώσετε. / τὰς ἡδονὰς γὰρ τῆς προμηθείας πάρος / σπεύδοντες ἀδικεῖτ', οὐκέτ'
ἀνθρώπους κακῶς / λέγειν δίκαιον, εἰ τὰ τῶν θεῶν καλὰ / μιμούμεθ', ἀλλὰ τοὺς
διδάσκοντας τὰδε." [How can it be right for you to make laws for men, and appear as
lawbreakers yourselves? Why, if - suppose something impossible, for the sake of the
argument - if you, Apollo, and Poseidon, and Zeus King of Heaven, are to pay to men
the lawful indemnity for every rape you commit, you will empty your temples in
paying for your misdeeds. You put pleasure first and wisdom after- and it is sin! It is
unjust to call men bad for copying what the gods find good: the sin lies with our
examples!] (ll. 443-51).

⁴⁹ Once, Ion had contemplated 'a better luck' for himself. When Xuthus will tell him that he is his father, a father that meets most of the requirements of that 'better luck', Ion will feel trapped into following Xuthus despite himself. Creusa would have asked for a child. When she will be given a child she will turn against it. In both cases one gets what one wishes for but it reaches him/her via so many detours and so many unanswerable questions that the inevitable 'isn't that what you wanted?' is felt as a cruel joke rather than an act of generosity.

Ion wonders about the father's relation to the Law. He is alerted to a profound split between the two. If the rape accusation is true, then the gods, all gods, are excluded from the 'universe' they regulate. The father's uncontrollable sexuality⁵⁰ seems to be provoking a question similar to 'is the Legislator subject to the Law he makes?'. In terms of sexuality, the question is simpler but equally difficult to answer: 'Is sexuality subject to regulation or is it an animal instinct, just like Ion had observed in the flying birds? If we wish to follow all the extensions of the question we could generate a string of 'serious' issues. For instance: if there is an animal sexuality in Apollo does this affect his divinity? If all gods conceal similar affairs do they still have the right to dictate rules? All these questions and many more spring from the same basic unarticulated aporia: *is it true that there is no (universal) law?*

Oscillating between what is debatable and what is an article of faith, the questions have one thing in common: they are never asked. Ion cuts speculation short, both in the dialogue with Creusa and, later, in the last lines of the scene. Instead of following his doubt in the direction of the father, he chooses the "easier" way of doubting the truth of the other, Creusa's purpose in making the allegations (l. 430). When the sanitised world of the temple is not just threatened by droppings but is about to crumble by a massive attack of impurity, Ion, the servant responsible for order and cleanliness, will regress into pursuing the lost purity which might return him to the wonderful suspension of ignorance - and by now - to the renunciation of knowledge. The consequences of the effort to 'repair' the damage while ignoring the real issues it involves have, in all cases, the same effect: dead end and a feeling that nothing is what it seems. The attempt to restore Apollo's good name - not to say his purity - is, for Ion, the essential issue that sets the value of an imaginary identification with the father. By refusing Apollo's sexuality and the wider implications of the disparity of the Father

⁵⁰ The knowledge of sexuality is "a special kind of knowledge, a knowledge of enjoyment (*jouissance*), which is by definition excluded from the Law in its universal-neutral guise: it pertains to the very stature of Law that it is 'blind' to this knowledge" [Žižek 1992, p. 159]. This is the way Žižek defines the schism between the Father and the Law. The context of Žižek's statement is not Greek drama but film noir. But aren't Ion and Creusa a little like the classic film noir detective who sets out to solve a case only to discover that he is more implicated and more involved than he ever thought? And isn't he unwilling to test his own assumptions till the very end? (See also Žižek 1992, chapter 5).

and the Law, Ion turns a blind eye to the very logical implication of the situation, to the fact that he has been serving lawlessness all along. In normal circumstances not every 'rumour' is believed or provokes such an aggressive reaction. Thus, while remaining within the bounds of propriety, Ion and Creusa manage to interfere with each other's phantasies rather than with the practical aspects of identity. While one is prepared to defend anything exposed to public view, be it one's status or lack (slavery, childlessness, namelessness), one is never prepared to be confronted with one's worst fears.

Creusa and Ion's relation after the news and the prohibition to say more is very interesting. The entire first meeting is traumatic: it starts innocently and ends tragically, establishing, at last, what should have been apparent from the beginning, *the strangeness* of the two interlocutors and the strangeness of the situation. The fragmentation of the peaceful world can be represented by the dis-location and estrangement settling in gradually, spreading over the subject, the other and the Other. In the next five pages we will try to present it as a composite expression consisting of the following: 'why me?', the deflection of strangeness, the growing similarity between Ion and Creusa, Ion's transformation, the verbal assumption that allows doubt to enter the picture, and the exposure of the difficulty of the relation to self, other and Other.

Getting involved in the discussion of sexuality Ion and Creusa discover that the unexpected turn of the events concerns *them* more than they could ever imagine. They, of all mortals, are picked out by the hand of destiny to reveal or cover the truth about the gods and destroy or preserve the order of the world. The inability to answer the question 'Why me?' and the failure to see any purpose in all these is followed by a renunciation of the entire experience. The entire experience is blocked out and in its place arises the growing dislike for the other, who blocks the return or the access to Apollo. As usually happens in cases like this 'it is the other's fault'. The other's fault conceals the absurdity of the immediate relation with the father. It is also the other's fault that what s/he says sounds true to 'me' in an uncanny way. In the other's words

one sees only what surfaces from one's own unconscious. Blaming the other, scapegoating the other is the supposed easy way out⁵¹.

Clearing the obstacle / other will of course generate several permutations of meaning. Ion and Creusa will literally pass through each other, in this sense, in the entire play. The meaning of the rape, *violence+sexuality*, though not explicitly accepted, will have to be decided. The future, the always *deferred interpretation*, will explore its constituents, violence and sexuality, trying to determine if they are indeed inextricably linked. All possibilities will be explored in and through language. This game is played at the limits and to the limits. Consider the strangeness at the end of the scene between Creusa and Ion concerning both the experience and the attitude to the other:

"τι ποτε λόγοισιν ἢ ξένη πρὸς τὸν θεὸν / κρυπτοῖσι αἰεὶ λοιδόρουσ' αἰνίσσεται; [Why does this stranger rail upon the God/ In riddles of dark sayings ever more] (l. 429-30, transl Way 1958)

and then:

"ἀτὰρ θυγατρὸς τῆς Ἐρεχθέως τί μοι / μέλει; προσήκει γ' οὐδέν" [Yet, with Erechtheus daughter what have I to do? She is naught to me] (l. 433-4, transl Way 1958).

In this context, the complete estrangement in the end signifies an attempt to take flight from the events and, more importantly, from the growing 'likeness' of Ion and Creusa. Estrangement as well as refusal to recognise what is involved in rape will be suppressing the 'violent' knowledge. The allegiance to the father will, from now on, be a constant refusal/ negation of the other, a form of *rivalry* in which they will fail to recognise their common interests.

Strangely however, more than ever before, Ion echoes Creusa's rape as *non involvement* in the sexual act, as being punished for *not doing* something. Though the rape as such is refused, negated, it returns in Ion's own vocabulary as the punishment of the innocent. The rape results in a freeze-frame, in a self-contradicting situation. It is a traumatic encounter with an ugly truth, which has no other recipient, no other participant than the present one. The rape is violently expelled, returned to the sender,

⁵¹ This time honoured scapegoating masks the nothing, what does not really work, the inconsistency of the failed identification. In "The sublime object of ideology" [1989, pp. 124-9], Žižek gives contemporary examples for a personal and social strategy that finds itself in its natural environment in Greek drama.

Creusa. Yet the expulsion comes only too late and this is what makes the present meeting a real traumatic encounter as the subject once again fails to predict and fend off what it has been fending off for a long time. As a pair, they are indeed in each other's hands; sole witnesses and possible victims of this very knowledge of the other's slip. And they have brought it upon themselves, the just-about-to-be-eliminated, homeless and future-less who have so convincingly identified themselves as such. This is why they will immediately see death in each other in the next scene⁵².

How does one go about finding the truth s/he cannot even define? The possibilities of language are enormous. The suspicious lack of evidence about the rape and its product, the child, opens up the world of 'belief' and the un-seen and requires, more or less, the exact opposite of Ion's shuttered faith. Ion, who is anxious to maintain the relation with the father at any cost, refuses to help Creusa. The child is reluctant to admit that the father could be anything different from what he wants him to be but Creusa's argument cannot be dismissed with a simple yes or no. The same lack of evidence opens up the world of *deception and appearances*. The secret possession of knowledge, to which he binds himself prematurely, forces Ion to re-assume the lost innocence in name only, to 'wear' it like a garment, a facade clothing nothing. Ion has entered the world of appearances through maintaining the semblance of the purity he has just lost.

Let us follow the consequences of Ion's *entrapment* in the promise to help Creusa. The reaction to the renewed trauma is indicated by the humanisation of the father ('the god is doing an injustice', 'the god is ashamed' l. 354 and 367) and the interdiction of speech, Ion telling Creusa, rather forcefully, not to pursue the issue any further. Silence is re-established but it is already transformed: those who know will not speak, neither the friend of Creusa nor Apollo. The meaning of secret is transformed too, it signifies the willingly chosen reversal; it is a return to ignorance only this time it is someone else's ignorance which eclipses one's own quest. The secret must remain a secret. The child must remain obscure. The issue must be given up. The mediators must resign. The general effect of these *transformations/ regressions* aims at

⁵² Ion and Creusa have located themselves at the margins of society, from where it is easier to expel someone rather than from another solid social position. 'Unwittingly' they have given each other the

repressing it. But since the acts of the god pass through language to the mortals and transfer to them the shame and guilt he is not there to declare for himself, it is up to the mortals to act on his behalf and in the name of reverence re-assume the role of the representatives they have just denied: they must take upon themselves the knowledge of the crime, keep it and live with the guilty consciousness. Once 'contaminated' with the *secret of the Other* one leads a 'dangerous' life as the secret can be used against oneself and the Other. But the god cannot be forced (raped) in any way and the rape cannot be undone in real terms. It can be undone in language, it can be expelled by *duplicating it*.⁵³ So does Ion in threatening Creusa. In order to repel the threat to his life he affirms the father's right to do as he pleases, he contradicts his ideals of purity, the obligation of gods to set a moral example and his earlier admission that the whole event was an injustice to the raped woman. In language Ion becomes the paradox he supports: *an akon rapist, a rapist-of-necessity*.

Another option could be considered. If Ion is going to undo the harm done to Apollo and his faith he must reverse the process of accusations or muddle it up until it becomes meaningless. He must either go to Apollo or silence Creusa for ever. The first possibility always encounters external difficulties and will not be considered here⁵⁴. The second, is even more difficult. Creusa has pronounced a blasphemy and Ion must either live with it or erase it. If he decides to live with it he has no place at Delphi because he is unclean. If he decides to 'clean' it he must either 'silence' Creusa himself or make her (force her) retract her statement. Again, his purity is gone. Whatever Ion chooses to do he must live with its consequences, and these consequences are invariably polluting. The sacrifice of purity is unavoidable and if Ion could really see beyond what meets the eye, he could have learned that it has

inspiration of 'where to start' with one's defence.

⁵³ The 'passive duplication' is taken from Bersani's "The Freudian Body" [1986, p. 53]. In his example Pasolini's cinematic rendering of de Sade's story adheres to the text and thus "duplicates that from which he wants to separate himself". Ion is not so successful. He duplicates the interdiction of sexuality and - partly - the rape in a verbal form but it returns.

⁵⁴ That he will never reach Apollo is 'guaranteed' by the structure of the play. Every time he intends to do so he is stopped, the first time by the arrival of Xuthus, the next time by the arrival of Pythia, then by Athena and so on.

already happened. We are reminded here of the ritual sacrifices and the willing participation of the victim, the *hekon* of the victim⁵⁵ that changes the killing into an act of devotion. We see once again how similar Creusa and Ion are in refusing their consent (*hekon*) and their sacrifice, to give in to the other's demand.

The 'flat refusal' is an elaborate form of resistance in which Ion and Creusa prefer to chase the elusive implications of the *hekon/akon* death debate rather than give in to the (admission of) the violence of the father. Just as they were implicated in the development of desire in the Other, they are now trying to see their way out of it.

The Other's *hekon* is brought into the picture:

"πῶς ὃ θεὸς ὃ λαθεῖν βούλεται μαντεύσεται;" [(how) is Apollo to reveal what he intends should remain secret?] (l. 365).

Ignorance and doubt, their own ignorance and doubt, joins the questions of the Other's intention and free will. Ion says 'suppose that...'

"Why, *if- suppose* something impossible, for the sake of the argument- *if* you, Apollo..." (l. 444) and by this very reserved hypothesis he lays the ground for more doubt in the future and for an awkward return of the repressed here and now. It returns all the more menacing at this point and- just because they have admitted that they are ignorant they must proceed with speculations and assumptions: 'if things were not like they are...'. Because although Ion and Creusa can boast of their secret and special relation to Apollo or any paternal figure they know absolutely nothing about it.

The limit is set at the consent of the Other, the willingness of the Other to reply, an exact opposite of his habit to impose his will and of their own experience of his silence. We begin to grasp the sheer 'enormity' of the task of restoring the Other's honour or to make him speak. And because it is impossible to 'cause' the Other's will, the entire issue deteriorates into an assumption of and about the Other will. This double assumption resembles the double movement involved in the introjection of the father's signifier in the dissolution of the Oedipus complex. But in our case it all happens without the slightest involvement from Apollo, without a word, a signifier. The 'return to Apollo' is then transformed into a new demand for love, in which, just

⁵⁵ See Vernant [1991] and Foley [1985] for the consent of the victim in sacrifices.

as in Ion's monologue, the child is trying to be love-worthy⁵⁶. The child always tries *to construct* the love of the Mother or the Father and locates its significance and its proof in the return of love which it cannot take for granted. It is not difficult to imagine that if Apollo had given a sign of love to Ion he would have eagerly died for him. Now he must risk everything in order to merit this love.

At the same time, a game of appearances starts: the other (rival) seems to know more than s/he is eager to disclose. In terms of desire, s/he has the phallus, the alienated secret of *my* completion. At the level of appearances, Ion and Creusa can mean anything and indeed, in the phallic discourse, everything to each other. But what regulates the appearances? What endows appearances with stability? Stuck in parallel worlds, Ion and Creusa reproduce not only their misery but what it wants to say (*veut dire*) something parallel and opposite to the proud assumption of the ways of the father. It manifests itself, in the middle of all impossibilities, in the impossibility of either Ion or Creusa going beyond the frustration of desire and its repetition. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Ion and Creusa cannot love, and cannot live in a real world. Having the return to Athens in mind, it seems more distant than ever.

We could say that the 'archetype' of all appearances is this inter-play of assumptions concerning both the Other and the other. The subject is unable to bear the other's desire without betraying or contradicting the desire of the parent- which is difficult anyway- and is therefore involved in a series of 'assumptions' (in both meanings) which dedicate but in reality alienate him/her from paternal desire.⁵⁷ Ion and Creusa will enter the world of appearances in the name of reclaiming the symptom of

⁵⁶ Dedicated to Apollo, Ion will not be able to separate himself from the god on account of Creusa's word. According to the Oedipus complex the child assumes / internalises the signifier of the father, a representative of the entire drama of incest and prohibition and gradually an identification with the father settles in. In Ion's case there seems to be an identification with the father, on the grounds of the restoration of truth and his good name that runs parallel with the rediscovery of purity by Ion. It is, however, an identification based on an assumed lack and an assumed truth and cannot be considered an adequate Oedipal identification. Thus, the entire adventure can be considered as a great show / project of exhibiting commitment to the father-Apollo, which, just like the morning song, indicates a new attempt to gain the love and the recognition of the indifferent father.

⁵⁷ In simple Freudian terms this is as close as I can get to bringing together the demands of maturity as external reality and the symptomatic fixation of the neurotic.

suspension, of justifying themselves in the eyes of 'those who matter' and of chasing the illusion of a return to purity. Blocked in real terms, it will take, instead, the form of regression into earlier stages of 'being'.

The chain reaction it causes is an amazing tour de force of purity and innocence. It is supported by the idealism of adolescence but it is not sufficiently explained by it.

Purity/innocence can function only as missing, when 'it is not' anymore. Now that it has suffered the terrible blow of castration it sustains two losses: one coming from older times and concerning the desire of the Father and the shame of parentlessness and one coming from the other's demand which annuls the good service to the god. Now that the support of Ion's innocence is gone and the veil of propriety is shuttered, he finds himself exposed to a gaping meaninglessness which threatens his entire life. Let us keep our eyes fixed to the appearance(s) of death, from now on, at the point of utter meaninglessness.

At the point where Ion was given the slightest chance of opening up his own desire he is now obliged to take the *imagined* Other's desire literally upon himself, together with the difficult futile task of informing all-knowing Apollo about the blasphemies of the woman. Under the influence of lies or misconceptions or hidden motives there lies the birth of the desire of the father who needs to be informed about what he has done. Ion's refusal to believe Creusa's story dedicates his desire to the Other's lack: he will be the phallus of the Father. At last there is a crack in the Father's wholeness.

Ion will keep shouting out his purity, keeping up the appearance of it, in the place of the lost purity. Beyond appearances, death, castration and the phallus meet in the same signifier. Ion's desire of purity is alienated in the *agon* of someone else's purity. His desire is sacrificed for the Other's desire and the two are finally made to coincide upon the signifier of the lost purity, upon what he and father Apollo have in common.

When loss 'materialises' in such a way it is difficult to lose sight of it. Fixed upon his castration which Creusa brought about with "deception", Ion will reclaim - or should we say invent - his masculinity by renouncing the feminine curiosity and by appointing himself the saviour of the father. Finally ignorance returns in the form of misunderstanding of one's own and the other's truth and solidifies in silent renunciation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SUMMARY

The Other's desire, which normally is of great importance for the subject, as *man's desire is the desire of the Other* according to Lacan, is confused/ mixed with the other's (fellow human being's) desire. Coming from the unconscious and filtered through the resistance and the misrecognitions of the ego and its defences it invites the subject to consent to its own death. Objectified in the form of an impossible polluting inquiry, desire implicates Ion and Creusa into an agon for which they have no other 'weapons' but their refusal to die or go down quietly and the knowledge that there is something beyond what meets the eye.

It is always a personal agon, what Lacan would call 'vicissitudes of subjectivity' [Wilden 1968, p.26]. In classical Freudian terms it is the sum of all the movements in which the crisis of 'being' is expressed (regressions, introjections, symbolisations, misrecognitions, resistances etc.).

'Alienated' in the other's refusal, the impossibility of desire now becomes the 'tangible' hatred of the obstacle. Ion and Creusa will hate each other as enemies. If they knew better they would love each other for that same reason. In course of regaining access to not-seeing its desire fading away, and to the illusion of *desire-lying-in-waiting* the subject will have to erase / remove the other / obstacle. The enmity splits the ambivalence towards the parent into two distinct trends: love (for the indifferent parent) and hate (for the other). A fellow human being is hated, bearing the subject's refusal of the Other's desire, another one is loved, bearing the subject's consent. And if the Other (be it the ferocious Father or the almost indifferent Mother) is the only one to support and authenticate the subject's desire then it will be considered- by the subject- to be on his side.

In the beginning there was the persistent indifference of the father - love object and source of impeded identification - who spoke nothing and wanted nothing. In the beginning there was a clouded ignorance and attachment to the desire of the Father that did not progress or move. But as always this bliss is disturbed by something that could not have raised suspicion or resistance. Freud would locate it in the pressure of

reality and approaching maturity. Lacan would locate it in the other's word, the very demand of the other between the lines of which the subject catches a glimpse of the desire satisfied, him being made significant, elevated (for the other) to the function of the phallus - to what he cannot be for the Other. In a perfect world, the news about the father's sexuality, would have caused a renunciation of the Other's desire and would have led to the dissolution of the Oedipus complex and to the symbolic destruction of the (imaginary) sanitised temple.

Ion and Creusa are uncannily precise in reaching the other's 'vulnerable area' and in order to do that they need nothing more than to speak the truth of their experience: sexuality and prohibition, or, in the language of the body, castration and death.

I would characterise Creusa and Ion's first meeting as 'unlucky' encounter. They are so much alike in their ignorance of the Other's (father) desire that they comfortably speak and persuade the other about the fact that they speak on his behalf. Only an ignorant person could have been fooled by that.

The early break of communication due to the refusal to face up to and deal with the issue of the Other's desire will be refracted in the entire play: the deferred interpretation will give direction to the entire *peripeteia*. Even when it appears that everything starts later, when Apollo gives Ion to Xuthus, we can say that in a metaphorical way, *peripeteia* always starts a from the Other's desire here and now.

In Scene One the refusal to address the issues of desire unfolds into endless encounters with meaninglessness, Ion turning to an *akon* rapist and the whole world taking on a 'strange' outlook. However, a point worth remembering is that little word at the end of the scene: *τῷ λόγῳ χρῆσθαι*, suppose that.. for the sake of the argument, which implants doubt in Ion's mind and ascertains the fact that Creusa's word has been taking effect. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Creusa gives Ion's life meaning, be it the 'project' to return to Apollo or the imaginary hunting of purity. Either of them gives direction, albeit an imaginary one, as it creates an *assumed signifier* of reparation-to-be-shared between father and son. This will be Ion's 'mission' and *συμφορά*⁵⁸ (*hap* according to Owen [1939]) from now on, the very lack

⁵⁸ The word is used later by Ion to describe the mixed blessing of meeting his earthly father, Xuthus. I think that the word is suitable for describing the mood of the first scenes. *Συμφορά*, according to Owen

of their 'assumption' and the need for revision. Creusa's *συμφορά* will be similar, as she, all too eagerly, falls victim of Ion's assured manners and display of authority. But having reached this complete misunderstanding they have only 'spoken the truth', their private mixed up world of the displaced and mis-aligned Father and Law.

[1939, p. 108] means 'hap': "The word is neutral, and its meaning is determined by the context, though it more often implies sorrow than joy.

CHAPTER 2

PART 1 THEORY

FREUD: THE INSTINCT AND ITS VICISSITUDES

For the analysis of Scenes Two and Three we will introduce the Lacanian notion of the Imaginary. Lacan develops it on the basis of the Freudian theory of narcissism. In the previous chapter we introduced the notion of narcissism, some aspects of the ego and an important instinctual vicissitude, repression. It would be difficult, however, to present the concept of the Imaginary without adding to Freudian theory. We will therefore introduce the notion of sadism-masochism, the relation of love and hate and the death instinct. The first two add to the general picture of the vicissitudes of the instinct and go further: the love/hate discussion ambitiously covers the transition from the earliest moments of sexuality (*autoerotism*) to object relations. The sadism-masochism opposition is a versatile tool which helps Freud locate, describe and account for the death instinct by taking advantage of the structural character of the particular vicissitude (turning upon oneself) and its participation in sexual development or regression. Lacan expands on Freud but without always addressing a particular Freudian grey area. He usually combines Freudian elements in such a way that a global comprehension of the dynamics and correlation of certain notions is better than an in depth analysis of some of them.

In the presentation of the Lacanian Imaginary we will proceed in the following way. We will first introduce the fundamental notions *Mirror stage*, *aggressivity*, *alienation* which concern the genesis and the development of the Imaginary. We will then turn to a more practical and applicable aspect of the Imaginary: we will present the visual representation of the concept, the optical schema. To this we will add the interaction of the Imaginary and the Symbolic in desire, in the field of *identifications* and in

analysis. Our aim is to compose the character of the Imaginary (with reference to the Symbolic) by exploring different aspects of it.

As a bridge between the theory and the discussion of scenes Two and Three I include two influences from the early stages of this project. The first is Lacan's own analysis of Poe's "The purloined letter" which also serves as an illustration of the Imaginary in practice. The second is a structuralist presentation of the play from a point of view similar to the circulation of the letter in Poe's story. It organises the succession of events and the main vocabulary of the play in fields and groups. The aim is to *autonomise* the text, to describe it as a network of signifiers that support and define one other. This structuralist account is also a first reading of scenes Two and Three. We will try to show *where* and *how* the Imaginary 'appears' in relation to an abstract chain of (symbolic) changes.

Sadism-masochism, love-hate the death instinct

Freud [1915, p. 123] defines the following vicissitudes of the instinct: *Reversal into its opposite*; *Turning around upon the subject's own self*; *Repression*; *Sublimation*. We will focus on the first two. We are again in the domain of the instinct, the components of which are: the pressure, the aim, the source, and the object (see chapter 1 of this thesis).

Sadomasochism combines both reversal into the opposite and turning upon the subject's own self. It mainly affects the aim of the instinct. The change is accomplished in three moves. Freud observes: "In the case of the pair of opposites sadism-masochism, the process may be represented as follows:

- (a) Sadism consists in the exercise of violence or power upon some other person as object.
- (b) This object is given up and replaced by the subject's self. With the turning round upon the self the change from an active to a passive instinctual aim is also effected" [Freud 1915, p. 125].

Masochism appears at the last turn: "(c) An extraneous person is once more sought as object; this person, in consequence of the alteration which has taken place in the instinctual aim, has to take over the role of the subject"⁵⁹ (ibid).

Freud explains that the phenomenon of sadism-masochism throws new light on our understanding of (early) sexuality.⁶⁰ We are not interested in the particulars of the discussion. We highlight the stages of sadism-masochism and we reserve it for future reference.

The reversal of love into hate, which Freud characterises as one of 'content', involves the entire sexuality, starting from the auto-erotic ego and arriving at the total ego. Freud's account is a short history of development.

In order to define love and hate he resorts to a full set of opposites that includes not only *loving-hating* but also *loving - being loved*, *loving / hating - indifference* [Freud 1915, p. 131] and to the polarities of mind, *ego / object*, *pleasure / unpleasure*, *active / passive*⁶¹.

The history of development starts with the *autoerotic* period when the external world is still indifferent for sexual purposes. During this period, the dominant opposition is

⁵⁹ See [Freud 1915, editor's footnote p. 125] "As a rule 'subject' and 'object' are used respectively for the person in whom an instinct ... originates, and the person or thing to which it is directed. Here, however, 'subject' seems to be used for the person who plays the active part in the relationship - the agent."

⁶⁰ The possibility of the third move as change and internalisation basically serves a classic purpose, the continuation of narcissistic pleasure in absence or withdrawal of an object. At the same time external objects are brought into the equation by the passive turn in which the subject 'is replaced' by the other [Freud 1915, p. 129]

⁶¹ Freud defines their meaning here: "The antithesis ego- non-ego (external), i.e. subject-object, is...thrust upon the individual organism at an early stage, by the experience that it can silence external stimuli by means of muscular action but is defenceless against internal stimuli... The polarity of pleasure-unpleasure is attached to a scale of feelings, whose paramount importance in determining our actions (our will) has already been emphasised. The antithesis active-passive must not be confused with the antithesis ego - subject - external world - object. The relation of the ego to the external world is passive in so far as it receives stimuli from it and active when it reacts to these...the ego-subject is passive in respect of external stimuli but active through its own instincts. The antithesis active-passive coalesces later with the antithesis masculine-feminine, which, until this has taken place, has no psychological meaning..." [Freud 1915, p. 132].

that between the ego loving itself and indifference. Gradually, some objects are introduced. If they are pleasurable they are introjected (incorporated in the ego). If not, they are expelled. This early pleasure-ego maintains its relation to the world on a very simple basis: "the external world is divided into a part that is pleasurable, which it has incorporated into itself, and a remainder that is extraneous to it. It has separated off a part of its own self, which it projects into the external world and feels as hostile" [Freud 1915, p. 134].

In the next phase (primary narcissism) the possibility of hating appears to replace indifference although the attitude to the external world largely remains the same. Freud notes: "If later on an object turns out to be a source of pleasure, it is loved, but it is also incorporated in the ego; ...for the purified pleasure-ego once again objects coincide with what is extraneous and *hated*" (ibid, emphasis added).

When narcissism is overcome and the interest in external objects is established a new shift of emphasis occurs. Pleasure and unpleasure are now located in the relation of the ego and its object, whereas previously love-indifference reflected the ego-external world relationship and love-hate the pleasure-unpleasure pair. Despite the shift of emphasis the process retains something of its old character: "If the object becomes a source of pleasurable feelings, a motor urge is set up which seeks to bring it closer to the ego and to incorporate it into the ego. We then speak of the 'attraction' exercised by the pleasure-giving object, and say that we 'love' that object...if the object is a source of unpleasure, there is an urge which endeavours to increase the distance between the object and the ego...We feel the 'repulsion' of the object, and hate it..." [Freud 1915, p. 135].

With this series of changes Freud emphasises the long journey of love and hate from the instinct to the *total* ego. No one, observes Freud, says that a sexual instinct 'loves' its object. It is the ego that does. The more we get away from the instinct and into the domain of the integrated ego the more we begin to understand that to employ the word love we need to refer to it "after there has been a synthesis of all the component instincts of sexuality under the primacy of the genitals and in the service of the reproductive function" (ibid). Having thus inter-woven the polarities of psychical life with the emergence of the object in the mature/genital sexual phase, Freud proceeds to the final definition of love, hate and ambivalence (the shift from one to the other) via

their historical development: "Preliminary stages of love emerge as provisional sexual aims while the sexual instincts are passing through their complicated development. As the first of these aims we recognise the phase of incorporating or devouring- a type of love which is consistent with abolishing the object's separate existence...At a higher stage of the pregenital sadistic-anal organisation, the striving for the object appears in the form of an urge for mastery, to which injury or annihilation of the object is a matter of indifference. Love in this form and at this preliminary stage is hardly to be distinguished from hate in its attitude towards the object. Not until the genital organisation is established does love become the opposite of hate" [Freud 1915, p. 137]. Hate in this sense is older than (genital) love. It comes from earlier phases, as a basic reaction to stimuli of unpleasure. As Freud suggests: "it remains in an intimate relation with the self-preservative instincts" (ibid) and enters sexuality via the ego-instincts, when the latter dominate the sexual function as in the case of sadistic-anal organisation. Ambivalence, therefore, will be the 'admixture' of love and hate and has its origins in earlier phases which are not fully surmounted.

In "Beyond the pleasure principle" Freud [1920] introduces the death instinct with reference to sexuality, sadism-masochism and the role of the ego in the narcissistic economy. He develops the concept in order to account for phenomena that do not conform to the general rule of the pleasure principle.⁶² Freud starts by revising a

⁶² The present account of the 'death instinct' follows the structure of the "Beyond the pleasure principle" article and is in fact an extended version of this footnote! But with Freud continuously revising the principles of his theory it was the only possible way of putting it in context. The "Beyond the pleasure principle" and the notion of the death instinct are landmarks of Freudian thought and later became more influential than the Oedipus complex itself. For me, the "Beyond the pleasure principle" is also the best example of Freudian/psychoanalytic method of writing.

According to the pleasure principle one of the ego's tasks is to avoid or fend off feelings of unpleasure from consciousness, but the validity of rule is threatened by a variety of 'unexplained' phenomena. Freud observed cases of neuroses where unpleasure has substituted pleasure [Freud 1920, p. 279], cases of "mysterious masochistic trends of the ego" (p. 283) inferred from anxiety dreams that do not seem to fulfil any wish, "compulsion to repeat" (p. 289) observed in the actions of patients and in transference neurosis, 'narcissistic scars' left upon the ego by the withdrawal of love or the abrupt end to early sexual explorations (p. 291), examples of cruel fate and destiny from literature (p. 293) and, of

previous polarity between *life-preservative instincts* which are 'seated' in the ego and *sexual instincts* and by incorporating into his theory contemporary ideas about the death and procreation of living organisms. "The instinct" in general is defined as "an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things" [Freud 1920, p. 308]. This restoration is actually death, a return to an inorganic state, an absolute and final removal of all tensions. Life serves death, says Freud, along with his contemporaries. Self-preservative instincts do no more than ultimately serve death by a long detour. They do not precipitate death but they make sure that the organism dies *of its own internal causes* and not due to external ones [Freud 1920, p. 311]. Sexual instincts, on the other hand, preserve and renew life. They aim at continuing life by synthesis (of cells). The two sets of instincts work together in a see-saw fashion: "It is as though the life of the organism moved with a vacillating rhythm. One group of instincts rushes forward so to reach the final aim of life as swiftly as possible; but when a particular stage in the advance has been reached, the other group jerks back to a certain point to make a fresh start and so prolong the journey" [Freud 1920, 313].

course, the (famous) fort / da game, Freud's own grandson articulating the sounds a/o while play-acting the painful experience of his mother's departure and return (pp. 283-7).

Failure to account for such phenomena threatened the value of the entire theory since the pleasure principle was one of its basic postulates.

There was also another reason for developing the 'death instinct', Freud's insistence on a 'matter of principle': the dualism that underlined his entire theory. At the time Freud was developing his theory other psychoanalysts, Jung most notably, were blunting the differences between certain oppositions in their effort to settle theoretical issues concerning sexuality. Freud had initially postulated a class of life preservative instincts as different and distinct from sexual instincts. Jung was moving towards merging the two. Freud's reply, the paper 'Beyond the pleasure principle', is written in such a way that it proceeds by displacing the opposition of life and sexuality in such a way that it does not consist of an opposition any more. Freud then asserts his faith in dualism and introduces the death instinct in order to renew and strengthen the opposition. Life and sexuality end up on the same side. Life and death, *Eros* and *Thanatos*, are the new polar terms. But how is this death (instinct) satisfied? By merging with sexuality. Sexuality, as we know, concerns the ego (narcissism) and the external world (objects). The death instinct is either driven out, towards the objects, or driven in, towards the ego itself. The sadism-masochism comes in handy at this point: it is the mechanism that allows a certain 'cruelty' or aggression to be directed outwards or inwards. In sadism-masochism Freud now sees the death instinct at work.

Having thus concluded that the sexual instincts are indeed life preservative Freud had to amend the earlier distinction. That would agree with the sexual function of the ego, which was necessarily brought into the discussion both as object (of love in cases of narcissism) and as co-ordinator of the life supporting instincts. Freud observes: "The ego now found its position among the sexual objects and was at once given the foremost place among them. Libido which was in this way lodged in the ego was described as 'narcissistic'. This narcissistic libido was of course also the manifestation of the force of the sexual instinct in the analytical sense of these words, and it had necessarily to be identified with the 'self-preservative instincts' whose existence had been recognised from the first. Thus the original opposition between the ego-instincts and the sexual instincts proved inadequate" [Freud 1920, p. 325]. At this point Freud faces the possibility of only one libido and asks: "If the self-preservative instincts too are of a libidinal nature, are there perhaps no other instincts whatever but the libidinal ones?" The 'death instinct' is offered as the other pole in order to maintain the dualism. Freud claims: "Our views have from the very first been dualistic, and to-day they are even more definitely dualistic than before-now that we describe the opposition as being not between ego-instincts and sexual instincts but between life instincts and death instincts" (ibid).

Suspending the theoretical discussion, looking for examples for the death instinct, citing the lack of theoretical clarity on the related areas, Freud suggests that the sadistic and the masochistic components can be considered as manifestations of the elusive death instinct. This brings 'death' in direct relation to ego and sexuality. He notes: "We started out from the great opposition between the life and death instincts. Now object-love itself presents us with a second example of a similar polarity- that between love (or affection) and hate (or aggressiveness). If only we could succeed in relating these two polarities to each other and in deriving one from the other! From the very first we recognised the presence of a sadistic component in the sexual instinct. As we know, it can make itself independent and can, in the form of a perversion, dominate an individual's entire sexual activity. It also emerges as a predominant component instinct in one of the 'pregenital organisations' as I have named them. But how can the sadistic instinct, whose aim it is to injure the object, be derived from Eros, the preserver of life? Is it not plausible to suppose that this sadism is in fact a

death instinct which, under the influence of the narcissistic libido, has been forced away from the ego and has consequently only emerged in relation to the object?" [Freud 1920, p. 327]. This, in fact, is what Freud proceeds to prove as best as he can. He traces the evidence for his case not in the 'mitigated' forms of sadism, that is, sadism fused with sexuality, but in cases where this has not happened, in the 'familiar ambivalence of love and hate in erotic life' (ibid). Freud's argument draws on libidinal development starting from the oral stage and the incorporation of the object, moving on to the anal-sadistic phase with the separation of the object, and finally to the genital stage with the return of the object and the redirection of sadism onto it. He further supports the scanty evidence by referring to clinical observations concerning masochism and in fact reverses the order of the stages of sadism and masochism: "there is no difference in principle" says Freud "between an instinct turning from an object to the ego and its turning from the ego to an object- which is the new point now under discussion. Masochism, the turning round of the instinct upon the subject's own ego would in that case be the return to an earlier phase of the instinct's history, a regression. The account that was formerly given of masochism requires emendation as being too sweeping in one respect: there *might* be such a thing as primary masochism- a possibility which I had contested at that time" [Freud 1920, p. 328].

This is how Freud accounts for life, death and sexuality, arranging the components in such a way as to allow the death instinct to 'tint' the erotic life in normal circumstances and be satisfied without causing too many problems. In "The ego and the id" [Freud 1923, p. 398] he synthesises the main elements of the theory, the position of the ego in relation to life and death instincts and the other two agencies, the id and the superego in the following way: "Towards the two classes of instincts the ego's attitude is not impartial. Through its work of identification and sublimation it gives the death instincts in the id assistance in gaining control over the libido, but in so doing it runs the risk of becoming the object of the death instinct and of itself perishing. In order to be able to help in this way it has had itself to become filled with libido; it thus becomes the representative of Eros and thenceforward desires to live and to be loved".

THE IMAGINARY

The Mirror Stage, the Ego, Aggressivity and Alienation

The Lacanian Imaginary is based on narcissism, the ego and sexuality. Some of Freud's terms are transposed into the new theory but the perspective is considerably different. Consider the ego for instance. In Freud's theory it appears as co-ordinator of various forces and with an almost 'benevolent' function. Freud, however, had also demonstrated that in analysis the ego was the main factor of resistance, since it was among its functions to deny unconscious material access to consciousness. Lacan emphasises the obscure/obscuring character of the ego. Historically, this emphasis is explained as part of Lacan's heavy criticism of all ego-boosting branches of psychoanalysis. For Lacan, the ego is an obstacle in reaching the truth of the subject, and by reinforcing it in analysis one does nothing more than make truth of the unconscious even more inaccessible.

The *Mirror stage*, Lacan's version of the genesis of the ego and the Imaginary, has been considered as one of the most original contributions in psychoanalysis. It recasts the Freudian *primary narcissism* and evokes the myth of *Narcissus* looking at his reflection on the surface of the water. Lacan 'borrows' an observation from the natural world: for each member of a species, sexuality is triggered only by members of the same species; even a simulation of the sexual characteristics of the species (in an experiment) can deceive the eye of an individual and trigger sexuality. Human sexuality appears to obey the same rule. It, too, depends on *seeing*. But it is also different from the sexuality of other species: it appears early in life, when the human being is still very dependent on others and incapable of perfectly controlling its own body. It undergoes a period of latency for most of the childhood, and then re-emerges and is completed in adolescence. In the *mirror stage* the child *sees*, observes, its own reflection (or the mother's) in the mirror and rejoices at the perfection of the reflection: it appears co-ordinated and complete and very different from what the child currently experiences: its incapacity, poor motor co-ordination and dependence. The image (imago) captivates and fascinates the child. To reach it becomes a goal, an ideal; a deceptive ideal, nevertheless, since the distance between the child and the

reflection is irreducible. This primary relationship with the image of oneself or the mother is interrupted by the intervention of the father and the advent of language (Oedipus complex). The seeking of the image, however, continues in the domain of sexuality. Re-discovering it in (sexual) objects defines the imaginary character of sexuality. Sexuality is closely related to narcissism and the senses, vision in particular.

In the "Language of psychoanalysis" [LP, p. 251] the *Mirror Stage* is defined in the following way: "a phase in the constitution of the human individual located between the ages of six and eighteen months. Though still in a state of powerlessness and motor incoordination, the infant anticipates on an imaginary plane the apprehension and mastery of its own bodily unity. This imaginary unification comes about by means of identification with the image of the counterpart at total Gestalt [form]; it is exemplified concretely by the experience in which the child perceives its own reflection in the mirror. The mirror phase is said to constitute the matrix and first outline of what is to become the ego".

Lacan speaks of a 'jubilant assumption' of the specular image by the child. This peculiar enchantment with the mirror image allows the child to 'imagine' itself master of its body, autonomous and complete by ignoring the important fact that the image is and will always remain external. The identification, therefore, is *alienating*, making the child *rival with himself* [Lacan 1948, p. 22] before anything else.

A second rivalry and a second identification will compete the picture and rectify the alienating effect of the previous one. In the following quotation Lacan reviews the situation combining his and Freud's terminology (ideal-ego or ideal I or *ideal-Ich*, and ego-Ideal, or *Ich-ideal*). The key term is 'identification': "We have only to understand the mirror stage as an *identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image-whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory of the ancient term *imago*. This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the *infans* stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursing dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its

function as subject. This form would have to be called the Ideal-I, if we wished to incorporate it into our usual register, in the sense that it will also be the source of secondary identifications, under which term I would also place the functions of libidinal normalisation. But the important point is that this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, *in a fictional direction*, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, *which will rejoin the coming-into-being (le devenir) of the subject asymptotically*⁶³, *whatever the success of the dialectical synthesis by which he must resolve as I his discordance with his own reality*" [Lacan 1949, p. 2, emphasis added].

What is the role of the *fictional* ego? It is a mixed blessing. Boothby [1991, pp. 31-2] summarises its properties: 1) its relation to the perceptual Gestalt and its fascinating influence; 2) its value as an object due to the fact that its imaginary origin endows it with the stability of objects; 3) its capacity to provide unity and stability of form; 4) its close link to the libidinal drives which it unites upon the image; 5) its tendency to temporal fixity: 'the ego strives to retain its structure intact in diverse relations and over the course of various developmental transformations'. In all these senses it is a factor of stability.

But fixity and permanence and capacity to concentrate on a singular form also imply inflexibility, arrested development, ossification. The ego is the seat of defences and misrecognitions⁶⁴. Lacan notes: "...In short, we call ego that nucleus given to consciousness, but opaque to reflection, marked by all the ambiguities which, from self-satisfaction to 'bad faith' (*mauvaise foi*), structure the experience of the passions in the human subject; (we call ego) this 'I' who, in order to admit its facticity to existential criticism, opposes its irreducible inertia of pretences and méconnaissances (misrecognitions) to the concrete problematic of the realisation of the subject" [Lacan 1948, p. 15]. Concerning the process of analysis, Lacan separates the ego from any

⁶³ Asymptotic lines in Euclidean geometry are defined on two parallel levels. On the same plane they would intersect, on the parallel planes they never do.

⁶⁴ The term 'misrecognition' is usually misrecognised itself. I will not attempt to define it. It is for the moment sufficient to say is that it belongs to the properties of the ego. The contexts in which the word appears are perhaps better to illustrate its meaning.

'benevolent function': "I am not talking about the ego in psychology, where it performs a synthetic function, but the ego in analysis, a dynamic function. The ego makes itself manifest there as defence, as refusal. Inscribed in it is the entire history of successive oppositions which the subject manifested to the integration of what will subsequently be called within the theory, but only subsequently, his deepest and most misunderstood drives. In other words, in these moments of resistance...we gain a sense of the means by which the very movement of the analytic experience isolates the fundamental function of the ego- misunderstanding (*méconnaissance*)" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 53].

Two terms closely associated with the imaginary function of the ego are 'aggressivity' and 'alienation'. Both of them carry the connotation of 'tension' in their meaning, as they border on the one hand with the *subject of the unconscious* and on the other with *the other* (fellow man or object of love). We will introduce aggressivity first, drawing on Lacan and Boothby. We will then give two aspects/definitions of alienation, a focused one by Boothby [1991] and a spectacular all-encompassing one by Bowie [1991].

In the opening lines of the paper on 'Aggressivity in psychoanalysis' Lacan relates aggressivity to the death instinct. Aggressivity is not aggression to others (though the latter is essentially a derivative of the former) but a disposition of the ego and a mode of behaviour that concerns the individual only. In analysis aggressivity gives rise to several expressions (ex: dreams, phantasies) of an ego in danger. Lacan gives various examples which culminate in the so called 'images of the fragmented body': "These are images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body..." [Lacan 1948, p. 11]. It appears to raise the alarm when the ego's unity is under threat. Despite appearances, Boothby [1991, p. 39] claims that "The aggressivity that interests Lacan is not a defence of an ideal unity of the self but a rebellion against it. (It) is a drive toward violation of the imaginary form of the body that models the ego". "Aggressivity", he continues, "is tied to death but not someone else's death" (*ibid*) in the same way that the Freudian 'death instinct' does not involve actual death but the internalisation (turning around) of that 'mysterious' instinct which is linked with sexuality.

The theoretical merit of the notion is accounted for in the following way: by developing it, Lacan was able to draw under the same umbrella all deviations from the normalising process that Freud had examined under different labels (ex: neurosis, perversion, scopophilia, sadomasochism, homosexuality etc. [Lacan 1948, p. 25]).

Due to its close relation to the ego and what is excluded from it, aggressivity becomes a valuable indicator in analysis. Analysis, in its most general conception, deals with the failure of the Oedipus complex to effect the normalisation of sexuality. Aggressivity emerges when analysis draws closer to discovering what has been excluded from the ego, the rediscovery of which would, in a sense, threaten its unity: "This conception" says Lacan, "allows us to understand the *aggressivity* involved in the effects of all regression, all arrested development, all rejection of typical development in the subject, especially on the plane of sexual realisation and more specifically with each of the great phases that the libidinal transformations determine in human life..." [Lacan 1948, p. 24].

Alienation will help us understand what is left out of the ego. The term maintains its close links with the unconscious- it is actually one of the two operations which engender it, bearing upon the repression of the instinctual representative. It is therefore closely related to the accession to language, by which, strictly speaking, the subject loses the imaginary unity and is condemned never to rediscover it. Lacanians sometimes emphasise the mechanism of alienation and sometimes the 'wondering' in language ever after, especially since the term did not originate in psychoanalysis but in philosophy. We present both approaches here.

Boothby [1991, p. 42] employs the terms *subject of the unconscious* and *ego* in his discussion of alienation and attempts to pinpoint their exact relationship to it. He stresses that alienation concerns the *subject*. He points out that the term is not adequately explained by the proposition (Lemaire's [1970] interpretation) according to which it is the 'giving up part of oneself to the other'. He disengages the issue of alienation from the conflict *between* two individuals and locates it in the relation of *oneself to oneself*: "what is alienating is not a relation of the nascent ego to another ego, but of the inchoate subject to its own ego" he says [Boothby 1991, p. 45]. The ego is essentially frustrating and limiting, and that is to be understood in its *libidinal*

dimension. Boothby goes back to the limitations inherent in the imago and to the miracle of unity that is achieved at the expense of leaving something out. From it, the ego will inherit the disposition to include and exclude. Thus, from the primordial *Urbilt* (imago) to the ego the same principle applies: limitation, inclusion and exclusion: "What is 'excluded' by the imago can therefore be viewed from either of two angles: in analogy to the intrinsic selectivity of the perceptual Gestalt, the imago entrains certain potential impulses and excludes others; owing to the temporal fixity of the imago, it excludes new forms of impulse arising in the course of natural development" [Boothby 1991, p. 59]. According to Boothby, alienation, is, so to speak, an internal affair.

Bowie [1991, p. 24] adopts a more 'extrovert' aspect. He describes alienation by "the various meanings played off against each other" and states: "The mirror-bemused infant, setting forth on his career of delusional ego-building, is condemned to the madness of the madhouse (alienation). But the *Entfremdung* of Hegel and Marx, familiarly translated into French as alienation, provides the infant's wretchedness with a certain philosophical dignity, just as alienation in its legal sense (as used of rights or property) gives it a faint air of juridical procedure". And after reminding us of the internal discord inherent in the term he turns to society: "For Lacan...the prototypical alienation that occurs at the mirror stage is seen weaving its way haphazardly through society...the 'I' is tirelessly intent upon freezing a subjective process that cannot be frozen, introducing stagnation into the mobile field of human desire. The inalienable alienation of the human species is, however, recounted not just in a hybrid philosophical language but in tones reminiscent of the Gothic tale" (ibid). He then return to the 'child' via literature: "The child, itself so recently born, gives birth to a monster: a statue, an automaton, a fabricated thing. Freudian theory had already talked at length about the 'constructedness' of the ego...but here such talk is recast in terms that Dr Frankenstein would have found familiar. From spare parts, an armoured mechanical creature is being produced within the human subject, and developing unwholesome habits and destructive appetites of its own. The self-division of the subject, first revealed to Freud by dreams, is here being re-imagined by Lacan as nightmare" [Bowie 1991, p. 26].

Mirror stage, alienation, aggressivity and the real nature of the ego are all foregrounded by psychoanalysis. Other disciplines, philosophy for instance, have chosen to emphasise consciousness, the self-awareness of the ego, which is of little interest to psychoanalysis and which, as we now know, stands on 'peculiar' ground.

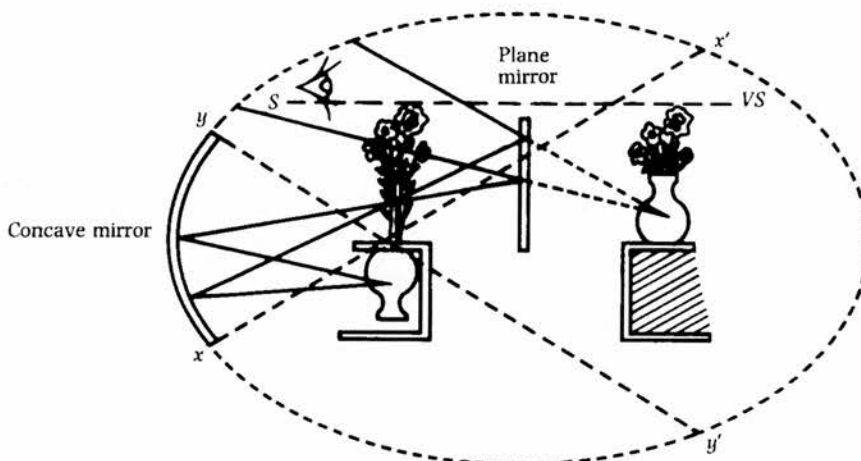
The optical schema; the investment of the Image with Libido

We will now discuss the visual representation of the Imaginary and sexuality and we will try to see how desire (a state of loss of object) relates to sexuality and the Imaginary in Lacan. We will also complete the picture of the individual's relation to others in identification and we will end this presentation with a reference to the treatment of the ego in analysis.

In his seminars between 1953 and 1955 [Lacan:Miller 1975 and 1978], Lacan lectures on the idea of the Imaginary and the Symbolic in analysis and in relation to Freud's psychoanalytic technique⁶⁵. The ideas of the mirror stage, the libidinal investment of an image and the imaginary function of the ego appear in the form of the optical schema below⁶⁶. We will be using the schema for its self-explanatory neatness. It both contributes to the understanding of the Imaginary and allows us to introduce and illustrate concepts significant for our discussion of Scenes Two and Three, such as 'identification' 'form', 'recognition'. The optical schema merges the early concentration of the sexual instinct upon a particular image with the later dynamic of the choice of sexual objects. I must point out that the optical schema is considered largely inadequate for more demanding aspects of the theory (e.g. relation to Other and *object a* - see Rose [1975, p. 146]) but we will use it in so far as it covers identification and in so far as its vocabulary can be used as a link and a metaphor for our analysis.

⁶⁵ For an introduction-and-more on the two-year Seminar, see Forrester [1990, pp. 102-140]"The seductions of psychoanalysis"

⁶⁶ Schema taken from [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 139].



Simplified schema of the two mirrors

The apparatus consists of a concave reflector, a vase concealed inside a box, a bouquet of flowers and a mirror. The flowers represent the sexual instinct which is 'destined' to be 'contained' by a vase but only in so far as we are prepared to consent to the illusory character of the operation. The eye/subject is located within the field of the apparatus. Lacan's intention is to demonstrate the dependence of sexuality upon *vision* and the *visible*. What makes the optical model suitable for the representation of the Imaginary is, on the one hand, the eye and on the other, and equally importantly, the *geometrical* straight-line properties of the transmission of light. The emphasis here is on *symmetry and illusion*: The eye can see both a real image (the flowers) and a virtual image (the vase) as reflections of/from the mirror⁶⁷. In Lacanian terms the conjunction of real images and virtual images represents the free play of imaginary and real objects [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 82], in other words the way in which sexuality is directed from the instinct to the external world as the *primordial imago* the first 'merging' is defused, perpetuated and will be sought in a long line of different real objects. It is due to this image that the possibilities of countless objects 'open up'. Man invests the *Umwelt* (as Lacan calls the external world) with libido by virtue of this imago. 'It gives the

⁶⁷ The term projection is significant in the imaginary. It has its origin in archaic modes of responding to the world by expelling or excluding bad or unwanted objects. It appears together with introjection, the taking in or incorporation of objects and both terms receive their meaning by reference to identification which concerns characteristics, traits and relations rather than entire objects. For introjection, identification and their relation see [LP pp. 229-31 and 205-208].

Umwelt its *form*', says Lacan, 'in so much as he is a man and not a horse' [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 125] thus stressing that it is not any image but an image of the same species that triggers sexuality and fixes the form of the *Umwelt*. The practical implications are significant: the imago will always work as the prototype for the approximation of *the narcissistic libido* and *the object libido* despite the essential inadequacy of the imaginary *captation* (despite, that is, their non-coincidence). "For man", says Lacan, "the other has a captivating value, on account of *the anticipation* that is represented by the unitary image as it is perceived either in the mirror or in the entire reality of the fellow being. The other, the alter-ego, is more or less confused, according to the stage in life, with the *Ichideal*, this ego-ideal invoked throughout Freud's article. *Narcissistic identification* - the world identification, without differentiation, is unusable - that of the second narcissism, is identification with the other which, under normal circumstances, *enables man to locate precisely his imaginary and libidinal relation* to the world in general. That is what enables him to see in its place and to structure, as a function of this place and of his world, his being... The subject sees his being in a reflection in relation to the other, that is to say in relation to the *Ichideal*" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 126, emphasis added].

The same 'conjunction' is echoed in the discussion of the function of the mirror in the middle of the apparatus. The ideal-*ich* / *ich*-ideal is also echoed. Lacan explains that the basic ego-other-object relationship is formed by the mirror. Think of the mirror as a pane of glass, he says, on which we can see both your face and the image of the objects beyond you. There will coincide *our* image with *the* images. This is a very important process, the *hominisation* of the world: "The real objects, which pass via the mirror, and through it, are in the same place as the imaginary object. *The essence of the image is to be invested with libido*. What we call libidinal investment is what makes an object become desirable, that is to say how it becomes confused with this more or less structured image which, in diverse ways, we carry with us" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 141, emphasis added]. The inclination of the mirror is governed by the voice of the other, thus inserting the symbolic relation into the apparatus. The 'symbolic' here is both the ego-ideal (oedipal super-ego) that brings an end to the mirror identification and the subject's symbolic connection to other human beings, the

socially/structurally defined relations. Both senses of the term affect our ways towards the Imaginary and Lacan stresses that in every possible occasion.

Desire, Identification, and the Ego in Analysis

An interesting account is given by Lacan for the relation of desire to (sexual) objects. "What is my desire?" he asks. "What is my position in the imaginary structuration? This position is only conceivable in so far as one finds a guide beyond the imaginary, on the level of the symbolic plane, of the legal exchange which can only be embodied in the verbal exchange between human beings" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 141].

With the emphasis on the symbolic position, Lacan is able to talk about *the see-saw of desire*, the perpetual reversion of *desire into form* and of *form into desire* [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 171]. The secret between form and desire must be understood with reference to all the notions we have so far developed. Lacan insists on two words: 'empty' and 'form' on a number of occasions. The image is an *empty form* that man assumes in the attempt at self-mastery [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 169], it is the image of the other's *form* that it is assumed by the subject later again and it is of himself as body, as the *empty form* of the body, that one becomes aware in that exchange (ibid). The trajectory from desire to the other and to sexuality is sustained by this basic illusion, an illusion of wholeness which is central to the function of the 'form'. The fact that the other, upon whom the libidinal investment is concentrated, is also subject to the illusion of wholeness does not affect the subject. In the other the subject sees its completion like it once saw it in the imago. Lacan observes: "The perpetual reversion of desire to form and of form to desire, in other words of consciousness and body, of desire *in so far as it is a part of the loved object*, in which the subject literally loses himself, and with which he is identified, is the fundamental mechanism around which everything relating to the ego turns" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 171, emphasis added].

The ultimate example is, for Lacan, the example of *falling in love*, a captation in which the narcissistic ideal-ego and the Oedipal ego-ideal merge. Being in love concerns a 'transformation' of the *other as speaking subject*, with whom the subject

has a symbolic relation, into *an object*: "The Ichideal, considered as speaking, can come to be placed in the world of objects on the level of the Idealich...you can rest assured that when this confusion occurs, the apparatus can't be regulated any longer. In other words, when you are in love, you are mad, as ordinary language goes" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 142].

Desire, Imaginary, Symbolic and *Real* also appear in relation to *identification* with other human beings without necessarily implying 'falling in love'. In 'The Imaginary' Rose starts from the ego-ideal to illustrate and explain how it intrudes upon the axis of identification, which is supposed to sustain the fascination and create an illusion of plenitude. This is the way she explains it: "The power of the ego ideal (*Ich-ideal*) to propel the subject into a position of dual submission to the master image introjected as ego ideal, and to those egos with which it posits itself as equivalent, becomes the starting-point for a second set of questions about the effective modes of identification, and their relationship to a demand which attempts to posit its own sufficiency, to retrieve or reconstitute a position of plenitude" [Rose 1975, p. 143]. Rose starts by adapting Freud's three modes of identification to Lacan's Real, Imaginary and Symbolic.

Freud [1921, p. 137] had specified the following types of identification: "(a) identification as the original form of emotional tie with an object; (b) regressive identification as a substitute for a libidinal object-tie by means of introjection of the object on to the ego'; (c) identification which arises with a new perception of a (repressed) common quality shared with some other person who is not the object of the sexual instinct.

In terms of the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic these are: (a) privation (demand directed to a lost object); (b) frustration (demand which cannot be given its object); (c) castration (demand for which there is no object). [Rose 1975, p. 145]. We notice that demand, which is directed to the external world, is aligned to "the place of the object it claims" and this, says Rose, defines the mode of identification (*ibid*). In other words it is always the *insufficiency* that codetermines, not to say primarily determines, the mode of identification: "Each type of identification is thus taken as the model of a mode of relation (primary object-relation, regressive identification with libidinal

object, identification between egos), a structure of insufficiency (privation, frustration, castration), and a tension between demand and desire with a corresponding set of alternative drives" (ibid).

We will end the presentation with a reference to the experience and the principles of analysis in relation to the ego. Up to now we discussed the constitution of the ego. In analysis its demolition takes place. The ego's identity is determined by its nature. It bears traces of its history of investment of objects and of identifications. The history of the ego's loves and identifications, of abandoned cathexes that have left their mark on it, can be followed backwards. 'Peeling its layers off' as Lacan suggests [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 171] will be the necessary preparatory task for 'unearthing' the subject's unrecognised desire. The process of analysis aims at achieving cure, alleviation or elimination of the symptom(s) by achieving the recognition of desire in language. Lacan has earlier asked rhetorically: 'what is my desire?' and had indicated that the answer depends as much on the Imaginary as on the Symbolic: "how could he [the subject] achieve recognition for his desires? He hasn't got a clue about them...in fact, he has to search out his desires. Otherwise he wouldn't need analysis. Which is enough to show us that he is cut off from what's related to his ego, namely from what of himself he is capable of securing recognition for" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 167].

Relating the subject to this knowledge of what seeks and must achieve recognition, initially involves the removal of the ego's *misrecognitions* and obstacles. The subject's history is reconstituted: "so that he can recognise all the stages of his desire, all the objects which have given constancy, nourishment and body to this image" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 182] and must go as far as the discovery of the Imago that governs and conditions the investments: "The first phase of analysis is accomplished in the passage from...what, in the ego, is unknown to the subject to this image in which he recognises his imaginary investments" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 186].

Rediscovering the imago is not the end. If analysis were to stop at this point, the subject would be left in a state of narcissistic love (*Verliebtheit*) encouraged by the recapturing of the image. This would be no different in essence from the constitution of all loves and all object investments to be found in the ego's history. The analyst's intervention would have assisted the Imaginary. And because the speaking subjects'

relation always evolves around the ideal-ego and the ego-ideal (super-ego) it would have been the analyst from the latter position, as voice shifting the mirror, that would have brought about the revival of narcissism.

TWO INFLUENCES

The Purloined Letter

In his 1954-55 seminars [Lacan:Miller 1978, pp. 191-205] Lacan discusses E A Poe's "The Purloined Letter"⁶⁸. It is a beautiful illustration of the workings of the imaginary and the symbolic. Moreover it is an application of theory on a literary text.

"The Purloined Letter" is the story of fascination and language. The catastrophic results of copying the moves of the other and falling a victim of the imaginary symmetry of form is brought to light by the circulation of a letter, a moving signifier that changes the symbolic position of its successive holders. The story's Queen receives the letter. As she is reading it the King and the Minister arrive and she places it 'innocently' face down on the table. The Minister immediately recognises the significance of the letter and steals it while the Queen, unable to do anything in the king's presence, watches passively. The police are asked to retrieve the letter on her behalf. The Minister's house is secretly searched but nothing is found. Enter the clever detective, Dupin, who is called to assist the police. He visits the Minister's house and immediately spots the letter. He organises a street disturbance in front of the Minister's house and while the latter is distracted by the incident he steals the letter and replaces it with a note. Dupin was able to locate the letter because he could see through the Minister's tactics, the fact that he, being clever, would never have hidden it in any place that the police could reach. The Minister's trick was simple: he turned the letter inside out, addressed it to himself with a feminine handwriting and replaced the seal with his own.

The story is analytically interesting for two reasons. First, for the symmetry of its main parts, second, for exemplifying the analytic fact that signification, the ever-

changing relation of the characters, is never where one thinks it is [Lacan:Miller 1978, p. 187]. In other words it is *the dialectical game* that interest Lacan-the-analyst in Poe's story beyond the plane of anticipating the other's action which defines the limitations of the imaginary.

In his reading Lacan attempts to show that the letter is the unconscious of its successive holders: "it is his [holder's] unconscious with all of its consequences, that is to say that at each point in the symbolic circuit, each of them becomes someone else" [Lacan:Miller 1978, p. 197]. The symbolic defines the subject. There are no characters in the traditional sense. They are defined by the relation "determined by the aspiration of the real subject through the necessity of the symbolic linking process". In this sense the letter is a character, synonymous, according to Lacan, with 'the original, radical subject' (ibid). Due to the significance of its uncommunicated content the letter is a pure symbol that affects anyone of its holders. "This position" notes Lacan "isn't fixed. In so far as they have entered into the necessity, into the movement peculiar to the letter, they each become, in the course of successive scenes, functionally different in relation to the essential reality which it constitutes" (ibid). The letter itself has value only in relation to what it threatens, violates, flouts and places in danger (Lacan:Miller 1978, p. 198] but it also seems vulnerable and unprotected as it falls pray to the intentions of its holder and loses its power when used once [Lacan:Miller 1978, p. 201].

Lacan stresses two important features of the story, the significance of the symbolic relations represented by the pacts of 'marriage' and 'royalty' and the unconscious-like flying quality of the letter whose addressee is only specified by the fact that a letter always reaches its destination.

The minister and the police are perfect examples of the imaginary, both towards each other and to others. The minister is by far the most interesting figure. In order to hide the letter he addresses it to himself with the signature of a woman: "...this is a curious relation to oneself. The letter undergoes a sudden feminisation, and at the same time it enters into a narcissistic relation- since it is now addressed in this sophisticated feminine hand, and bears his own seal" [Lacan:Miller 1978, p. 199]. The minister

⁶⁸ See also Lacan [1972].

does not use the letter. He remains silent, knowing that Queen knows about it and, according to Lacan, it is as if the minister remains silent about a repressed disorder. The real significance of his silence is clearly seen in the lack in the symbolic: "He suspends the power conferred on him by the letter in indeterminacy, he gives it no symbolic meaning" and the imaginary dependence: "all he plays on is the fact that this mirage, this reciprocal fascination is established between himself and the Queen, which is what I told you about earlier on, in speaking of the narcissistic relation. The dual relation between master and slave, founded in the last resort on the indeterminate threat of death, but on this occasion on the fears of the Queen" (ibid). Thus the minister will find himself in the same position as the Queen when he will be dispossessed of the letter by Dupin. Here Lacan notes: "This is not due to the ingenuity of Dupin, but to *the structure of things*" [Lacan:Miller, p. 201, emphasis added]. When in the same position as the queen the minister will fall victim of the same trick.

The police as imaginary are defined by their relation to power and to the minister. In the former sense are victims of the power itself: "[they] have been persuaded that their efficacy rests on force- not so as to put trust in them, but on the contrary to curb their functions. And thanks to the fact that the police think that they are able to exercise their functions through force, they are as powerless as one could wish" (ibid). This absolutely imaginary police is the guarantee of the minister's own power. For him, if they, the representatives of power, cannot find the letter no one can. This is the minister's mistake: "It is having forgotten that if the police haven't found the letter, it isn't that the letter can't be found, but rather that the police were looking for something else. The ostrich feels secure because its head is buried in the sand- he's the perfect ostrich, who would think itself safe because another ostrich [*autre autruche*] - *other-ich* [*autrui-che*]- has its head buried in the sand. And it leaves its behind to be plucked by a third, who takes possession of its feathers and makes a panache of them" [Lacan:Miller 1978, p. 203].

The triumph of the clever detective is based on avoiding the traps of the imaginary. He does not look for what the police have been looking for and he finds the letter. He avoids the effeminating silencing effects of having the letter by extricating himself

from its circuit: he demands a fee for his work and he retires from the scene. That is why Dupin is successful.

The circulation of the letter and the step-by-step displacement of the characters from scene to scene make it certain that the letter 'reaches its destination'. The structural positions remain the same but they are occupied by different persons.

Dupin's arrival has the following effect: "It [the letter] really reaches the King, a King who still doesn't know anything. But the character of the King has changed in the meanwhile. having shifted one notch along, and become the Queen, it is now the minister who is the King. In the third stage, he [Dupin] has taken the place of the King, and he has the letter" [Lacan:Miller 1978, p. 204]. As for the final blow, Dupin's ridiculing of the Minister, the letter he substitutes for the original allowing him to believe for an indefinite time that he has the real item, falls perfectly within the eye-catching powers of the imaginary. Dupin's new letter is actually a new *form* of the letter to which the minister remains attached and which he might have to account for in the future.

Lacan ends the seminar with a reminder of the key point of his account: "Everything which could serve to define the characters as real- qualities, temperament, heredity, nobility- has nothing to do with the story. At every moment each of them, even their sexual attitude, is defined by the fact that a letter always reaches its destination" (ibid). "Ion" is similar to the "Purloined letter" in many respects. The letter is a child, the mirage of which passes in front of each character and awakens deep emotions, not only in relation to other human beings but in relation to unacknowledged and repressed desires. But there is no clever detective. Instead of this, we have two big camps, Ion and Xuthus on one side, Creusa and her friends on the other. They are consumed by passion and mainly waste themselves in completely erroneous anticipations of imaginary, narcissistic passions, envy and hostility.

A Structuralist Influence

The second influence is structuralist. It systematises the passing down-the line of the child / message from the lips of Apollo to Creusa.

I use a quasi-structuralist model inspired by Greimas [1983] for two purposes: a) to introduce the vocabulary of the play⁶⁹ and b) to sketch the linear movement of the progressing unravelling plot, the merciless forward-moving linear plot that introduces 'a child', a strange object, in the discourse and addresses it 'to whom it may concern'.

The following topography is based on two ideas: Bremond's [1980] notion of contractual relations⁷⁰, according to which a narrative is a succession of engagements of interest, and Greimas' s semiotic theory. Greimas' s most popular idea, the '*logical square*', allows for a semiotic reduction of a text to a series of two-pair opposites bound together by relations of contrariety and contiguity. The logical square exhausts the semantic combinations of two pairs of opposite terms. Thus two terms (a) and (b), black and white, for instance, can be conjoined in a third term (a and b) 'grey', or disjoined (neither a nor b), 'colour' in general.

The vocabulary is organised in four cornered schemata.⁷¹ They fall short of Greimas' structuralist rigour and I only use them for their expository clarity⁷². Scenes Two and Three are *mirrors* of each other and I believe it is essential to know from the beginning what are the common terms of interest, the options available, the tensions and the limits of action. Inspired by *the symbolic*, the ultimate referent of human action-thought, my intention is to demonstrate the economic simplicity of the possibilities common to all sides. In our play the unravelling of meaning concerns the following elements: a. the structure of communication: Sender-Message-Receiver; b. the structure of exchange; c. the object; d. the organisation of the intellect.

⁶⁹ We are interested specifically in the language of the play not in the Greek language in general. For instance, we refer to 'knowledge' not as 'knowledge in the Greek through' but as knowledge in Ion, that appears with other terms in the field of the intellect such as 'ignorance', belief, speculation etc.

⁷⁰ According to Bremond [1980] a story is a process of modifications or preservations of a given situation. Modifications can be favourable or unfavourable, further divided into amelioration/protection or degradation/frustration. Actions, intentions and motivations can be described with reference to these standards. I found the exercise in Greimas [1983] and Bremond both interesting and useful in distancing myself from the emotional appeal of the drama.

⁷¹ The four-cornered schema according to Greimas has nothing to do with the four-cornered schema according to Lacan, at least for the purposes of our exposition. (see Schleifer [1987, chapter 5 and pp.182-201] for a discussion of the similarities and differences between Greimas and Lacan).

The plot is presented as a series of repeated loops or movements. Thus apart from the symbolic framework such an un-sentimental approach to drama can provide us with a first approximation of the *imaginary* as emotional *investment* of a situation⁷³.

The circulation of the 'child' begins with Apollo as the original *Sender*. In psychoanalysis *a beginning* is grounded in language, so Apollo is the first sender not because he is a god but because he speaks first about *the* child. Like another 'in the beginning it was the word' the absolute beginning is only possible in the symbolic where the subject names and is named, recognises and is recognised, makes a new start and assumes a role, announces his intentions and is called to assume responsibility for his acts.

The Form of Communication

For any act of communication Greimas proposes the basic schema:

Sender - Object of communication - Receiver.

We modify it in the following way: a. In place of 'object of communication' we propose 'message/object', in order to account for the fact that between the sender and the receiver both words and things can be exchanged. b. There are two receivers for the same message, a direct and an indirect one. The indirect receiver is either the representative of someone who is not present or a mediator. The positions *Sender* and *Receiver* can be held by anyone. The circulation of information is accomplished as the Receiver of the previous sequence is raised to a Sender in the next sequence.

⁷² An application of Greimas' model on Ancient Greek drama can be found in Moudatsakis [1986].

⁷³ I would say that it can provide us with an almost 'objective' insight into destiny, not the superior dark forces that guide the world but the implications of being born into an organised system, playing by its rules and having to face the inevitable of taking a position in it. This definition fits the description of the symbolic according to Lacan. Is destiny symbolic then? It is. But it is more if one considers the fact that the adjustment to the symbolic is not an act of obedience by anyone. Most of the times it is exactly the opposite. It is rebellion against the one who represents it, against the fellow human being who seems to govern rather than be governed by it. To resist means to anticipate, to plot, to make plans, to enter an imaginary rivalry with the other. Destiny is imaginary too. It is the junction of the symbolic and the imaginary -the edge at which analysis is conducted. What does it mean 'to meet one's destiny?' or 'to face it'? In our play it means to live or die with or without a good cause.

The Categories of Being

to be

to represent

both to be and represent

neither to be nor represent

When Apollo gives Ion to Xuthus he introduces a problem much bigger than the lack satisfied by his 'generosity'. A tension develops between the four corners of 'being' and the subject, any subject, is left to account for its existence, fundamentally unsatisfied by the 'neatness' of the divine solution.

'To be' implies a permanence and a continuity which is mainly supported by the personal account of who *I have been* that far and a narcissistic desire to reach a 'will be' or a 'would be' in the future.

To locate the question of being in the circulation of communication means that any issue of identity or lack is only meaningfully addressed in language. On "the wall of language" says Lacan, are projected both the imaginary and the symbolic, and this is exactly the case here, even when 'silence' carries the main burden of communication.

In language, it is the other who gives you a precise definition of who you are by resorting to what you represent for him: 'my son', 'my daughter', 'my slave'. This symbolic nomination calls for a recognition, acceptance or refusal of the proposed relation. To accept means to be able to account for it. To refuse means to fall out at the margins of society. Acceptance of the other's nomination means bringing being and representing together, examining their compatibility, recognising the one in the other. Refusing means flirting with death, running the risk of being excluded from meaningful social relations.

However appealing, accepting divine solutions or the bestowed meaning is never a simple task. Difficulties arise when one tries to account for events and choices. Even if there is no free choice and no free will in the strict sense of the term any meaningful account of being is necessarily inspired by (the fear of) death, the non-meaning lurking behind every good choice and every act of belief. If the Greeks managed to project their gods outside themselves and rid those images with the responsibility of choices they would rather not make they never managed to get rid of the return of this

responsibility in the form of aporia. Consider, for instance, Ion's aporia in the face of the history of his life as he attempts to account for the apparent discontinuity of being the foundling, the natural son of Xuthus, both and none, a nameless servant who landed in the best lack he could ever have imagined. One can live, perhaps, with the illusion of no choice but no one can live with gaps and fragments of identity and fears. As for the knowledge that there is someone out there who knows it offers no consolation, it just makes things worse. Like another Oedipus Rex one, anyone, can never resist the desire to know.

The Structure of Exchange

give: favour

take: appropriation

give and take: exchange

neither: gift

Exchange is a basic law of society. It can be considered as a regulated and recognised give and take (as opposed to theft, for instance). The legal and regulatory aspect of its meaning is always present in the background of our play but it is the pairing of exchange with the other three terms that interests us here. These are: favour, gift and appropriation. It is the inability to establish *exchange proper*, legal and regulated, that diverts the account about the 'child' to other terms.

Favour (as 'give' only) carries the idea of exchange one step beyond since it suspends the completion of give and take and introduces the goodwill necessary for the future reciprocation or completion of the act. In this sense one expects to be given later what is due to one. Therefore one expects to be the receiver of a second move by which the suspended transaction will be completed. This would be the case of Creusa and Xuthus who expect or believe to be given back what belongs to them. Ion, too, expects something in return to his services, either a better lack or license to use the name of Apollo. Creusa's servant is not very far from that either. A closer examination of 'favour' shows that it is a difficult relationship, open to misinterpretation, laden with 'debt', unfinished or even totally unsupported in the

symbolic⁷⁴. Why, for instance, should a servant be included in a circuit of favours since his entire existence is defined by his obligatory labour? Why should any one's self-appointed task of glory or destruction be rewarded eventually?

On the other hand favour has a flavour of divine inspiration that transcends the vulgar commercialism of give and take. Hermes announces that he did a favour to his brother when he brought his child to Delphi (l. 36-7) and there emerges a sense of honour-to-be-saved, a matter too delicate to be resolved by socially prescribed rules. Favour will be an all important register in the next scenes, and more than any other term will underline the debate of give and take and responsibility.

Appropriation is the least controversial term. It contravenes all the rules of society apart from 'power'⁷⁵. It opens up the possibility of enmity and hatred.

To complete the relations of exchange there is the 'gift'. It implies an object changing hands but not in terms of exchange or favour. It may be a ritual gift, a token of agreement, or an heirloom which like a ritual gift has no practical use but is passed on from generation to generation.

The object

In view of childlessness, the lack manifested in the play, the missing object is the child. In view of ignorance about the child the object is knowledge. Acquisition of knowledge and the child converge at a certain point:

animate (child)

inanimate (knowledge)

both animate and inanimate

neither animate nor inanimate

At times knowledge figures as the intermediate object leading to the child. In order to find one needs to know. At times it substitutes the child and seems to take its place, when, for instance, Creusa claims that she only wants to know that her child is dead.

⁷⁴ Unsupported in the sense that 'unfinished business' usually is. One may think that he owes or should receive a favour back and may act accordingly. Thus the action, that has symbolic consequences is actually grounded in the grey area between the symbolic and the imaginary.

At another point it coincides with the child and the one justifies the other: if you have the child you have knowledge and vice versa. By having the first Xuthus can further the second. At every turn knowledge- or the lack of it- 'summarises' the position of the subject relative to its immediate need, the quest for the child or identity, and to the other.

Intellect: Knowing and believing:

I call *intellect* the general field of employment of the intellectual faculty⁷⁶. I have not chosen the term *reason*, though from the point of view of consciousness it would have been equivalent. Examining the thinking mechanisms of the play one realises that believing, which seems more like a suspension of knowing or wanting to know, is as valid a mechanism of proceeding with reality or action as a rigorous logical argument. None, however, is error-proof. Examining the attitudes to knowledge one soon comes across a major inconsistency: everyone wants to know and declares it vehemently, but then every one is ready to put reason aside if it leads nowhere. Everyone can offer a well built argument but without noticing that something important has been left out. At times the demonstration of reason seems mechanistic, not to say childish. Yet, excluding the initial erroneous assumption, arguments can be impeccable. The intellect spreads along the four corners of:

<i>knowledge</i>	<i>ignorance</i>
<i>belief</i>	<i>deduction / anticipation / doubt</i>

⁷⁵ The vocabulary of force and violence is included here.

⁷⁶ In 'Intimations of the Will in Greek Tragedy' Vernant [1972] claims that the term 'will' as we understand it today is missing from the Greek vocabulary. He organises the field of thought in a brilliant way around the missing category. We claim knowledge of it and continue to use the term 'will' aware of the difference. In our account the missing term can join a long line of missing or miss-used terms and lost and missing causes. Will is not named but is evoked, and if the loss of will appears to culminate with the acceptance of the god's orders (someone else's will?) the play affords us the luxury of a denouement structured around an il-lose-ion: one is saved by losing what one never had.

Knowledge concerns the known and the know-able, something to be remembered and something to be worked out rationally. Ignorance and belief mark the end of the individual and the beginning of the volition of the other who owns and commands the missing information. To believe the other, be it the god or the fellow human being, means to accept its reasoning. 'Ignorance' hides a secret which still lurks in the English words ignorant and to ignore. 'To ignore' is both not-to-know and to leave outside deliberately. Deduction, anticipation and doubt cover the field of producing knowledge out of nothing or next to nothing, advancing the mental process by speculating on the other's move, and one's assumptions about how the other is reasoning.

We might ask what is it all about? Truth? Deciphering the mysterious object, the unknown child that comes from Apollo? There is indeed an intellectual attempt to grasp what comes from beyond reason and memory. Notice however, that while 'knowledge' will question everything and everyone in its course it will not question itself. In very simple terms 'What if I am wrong?' is never taken into account when one is under pressure to produce certainties and hold on to them. Its course is regressive. It aims at 'bracketing out' the present and re-instituting a 'bracketed out' past in its place. Xuthus, for instance, wants to bring back his only son and Creusa wants to reinstate the order of things to what they were before his appearance. Old knowledge, obsolete repressed knowledge, is re-employed. The data of memory are revised in the light of the present circumstances.

Once self-questioning is excluded, the aspirations of the subject, which are essentially limitless, can only take their measure *from the other*. The comic and at the same time serious attempt of the subject-in-panic resembles an assault and reliance on mortals and immortals in doing what the other does, anticipating what the other is going to do, exceeding the cunning or the cruelty of the other. The other inspires. Excess and lack of proportion inspires. The subject's route to its aim, passes through *reflection* in both senses of the term.

The circulation of the 'child'

The oracle is a linguistic message. Its meaning might be literal or metaphorical. It is always addressed 'to whom it may concern' and as such it never fails to reach its destination. Here we have no clever detective to tell us who the real receiver is and everyone assumes it is himself. Inversely, in order to appreciate what is involved, we could imagine this "passing-of-the buck" going on for ever and Apollo's gift being wasted like a letter really purloined which is condemned to pass back and forth via the same temporary holders. This would be the real disaster, which would only end in the destruction of the unwanted 'child'/ message⁷⁷.

Considering the scenes as successive loops of action we clearly see that the plot is governed by the following law: receive and pass on. In the same sequences we can also locate the place(s) where emotional or imaginary *investment* will intrude.

First sequence

Sender: Apollo / Message: the first man you see is your son / Receiver: Xuthus (direct).

If Apollo expects something in return from Xuthus then this is the first part of an exchange, if not, it is a favour. But it is not Apollo's intention that matters but the king's interpretation. He chooses the literal meaning according to which 'is' equals 'has always been'. In the same way he considers the offer as a return of what belongs to him, while the oracle only grants him two separate things, an object and the knowledge that there is now a son for him. In other words it recognises Xuthus' desire to have a son but nothing more. It is Xuthus who establishes Apollo's truth half way between his own understanding and the unexpected satisfaction of his wish, invests it with reality and makes it imaginary⁷⁸.

Second sequence

⁷⁷ Which, being a modern reader, I consider far more important than Apollo's dignity.

⁷⁸ We do not even need the technical sense of the word here. Ion is imaginary to the extend that Xuthus account of his birth and life is.

Sender: Xuthus/ Message: you are/he is my son/ Receiver: Ion (direct) and chorus (indirect)

To recognise has two meanings, to identify a familiar form and 'to accept as one's own'. Ion's recognition cannot be an identification but it is made to resemble one. Xuthus proposes a mutual recognition. He offers the certainty of his recollection and the infallibility of the oracle as evidence. Ion is confronted with an irresistible combination of knowing and believing, the already established deal between the god and the king. He cannot escape Xuthus' certainty, his own lack (parentlessness) and his devotion to the god. The proposed agreement is based on mutual need and the tacit understanding and consent of a third party who is deliberately ignored for the moment⁷⁹. The recognition of the father is nothing more than a recognition of a deal, a symbolic recognition from which the corresponding natural bond is missing. And it will be missing till the moment they begin to *invest* the pact with emotion. Reality is constructed in a make-believe way.

The second receiver of the message is the chorus. They are persuaded by Xuthus as much as Ion is. They are assigned a piece of knowledge and are forced to consent to something which contradicts what they represent, loyalty to Athenian tradition. Their decision to intervene is always a structural necessity. They rely on the first meaning of recognition, that is, they identify the king's son but do not recognise him. They reopen the gap between the two meanings and then transcend it by pairing it with death⁸⁰.

Third sequence

*Sender: chorus/ Message: you will not have a son/ the god gave a son to Xuthus.
Receiver: Creusa (direct), Creusa's servant (indirect).*

⁷⁹ In order to recognise each other and father and son Xuthus and Ion have to put both Apollo and Creusa aside- we will discuss this extensively in the next reading.

⁸⁰ Choosing between the literal and the metaphorical and investing the chosen term with emotion/death duplicates the king's act.

The chorus is a mirror. They reflect the image of the king/husband to Creusa. They reflect his certainty, the form of it, but over a different content. Just like Xuthus they have been there, they have seen and they can interpret.

The content of their intervention can always be dismissed as a lie. But if we assume that they are not exempt from the observable tendency of all characters to be self-deceived at some point, we could say that the chorus illustrates the maximum distance between perception and consciousness which allows for the (unconscious) fear to rush forth in the shape of death. The chorus' own intentions soon become irrelevant as Creusa is not misled by their 'lie' but by her own interpretation.

Fourth sequence

Sender: Creusa/ Message: Recognition, he is not my son- murder attempt/ Receiver Ion and Apollo.

Creusa locates herself in a position of lack, neither being nor representing the mother of the child, and plans to extend her decision to a persuasive action. The only line of action consistent with the double refusal is one which returns the gift to its sender, in a move that duplicates ignorance (being ignored by the other). Creusa does not return the mental equivalent of the gift, the knowledge of her dissatisfaction, but the object itself. This intervention aims at restoring her to a permanent state of lack and paradoxically to a permanent 'freezing' of communication with Apollo. Creusa passes back her version of the reversal of fortune as it affects her and in the sense that she faithfully follows the pattern of the entire play. In the same way as Xuthus and the chorus pass their ignorance on to the other person and therefore get rid of it, Creusa passes her ignorance on to the next receiver(s).

In the position of indirect receiver Apollo would find himself the receiver of his own gift. The dissemination of his gift/message through a series of mediators reaches Creusa in reverse form and Apollo on its way back. The human object is 'swallowed up' in failed 'communication', a situation that threatens to deteriorate into a never ending exchange of 'nothing' between two parties which would be handing each other the same gift.

Ion, the direct receiver of the murderous act, must bear the responsibility of someone else's faults. Indeed the child is branded for life by his parents' mistakes.

Fifth sequence

Sender: Apollo (Pythia)/ Message: Box/ Receiver: Ion (direct), Creusa (indirect).

Last in the line of receivers Creusa and Ion are left with father's mistake to live or die for. The necessity to recognise it, to assume responsibility for it and for oneself and also to take death into account emerges from the structure itself: the buck goes no further. The last receiver must know what to do with it.

Creusa and Ion's second meeting compacts the present, the past and the future, the message, the sender and the receiver in a confrontation which metaphorically 'freezes' the circulation of meaning in the face to face symmetry of the opponents.

However, the next move will emerge from the same structural properties: even if you hold your truth of your existence in a box you have to pass it on. It is always the other that will tell you who you are.

I have tried to represent the plot of the play up to Creusa and Ion's second meeting as a series of message communications and (partial) emotional investments. This is the linear progress of the play to which we must fix our attention in order not fall victim to the fascinations of human drama, in order avoid an emotional response to the play. Let us keep in mind the relentless structural necessity behind the blindness of the protagonists, behind the lies of the chorus and the happiness of recognition all round.

PART 2 TOWARDS THE IMAGINARY

In the beginning there was the father. The social rebirth of the child and the parent derives its authority from the symbolic importance of the act and the appeal of the emotional value of the bond. The ego is built here. Aided by the other's love and presence, it is firmly grounded in the *visible* and the *obvious*, the input of the senses and the infallibility of reason. When everything is obvious, transparent and easy to explain, when anyone can call the other's bluff, the traumatic encounter with nothingness, the shocking first scene, is eclipsed by the abundance of love offered by the fellow human being.

Scenes Two and Three are full of honest mistakes and subtle deceptions, full of passionate declarations of devotion and seemingly persuasive arguments of pure reason. They are full of emotional traps meant to balance their lame logic with an appeal founded on a familiar theme: the evils of old age and childlessness.

For us scenes two and three are arrangements of mirrors. They reflect each other, they engage in an imaginary dialogue with each other, they display rigorous knowledge in such an extraordinarily faulty way that in the end the error that sparks them off does not seem important any more. But they do not fail entirely. Two scenes of human folly are not there just to destroy 'our confidence' in reason and to excite some unspecified religious feeling. They open up the dialectic of the ego and the object in language. They allow the play of *form* and *desire* to begin and to reflect its very beginning.

Starting with the divine imperative 'thou shall be...' and the unquestionable necessity of obeying it, the stereoscopic geometry of the two scenes evolves around *the voice of the other*. No one goes beyond the message/child introduced by divine decree and no one ignores it. This act of reverence defines the junction of the imaginary and the symbolic, the attraction towards the verbal destiny, the vague super-egoic speech of the father that orders: *enjoy, satisfy your desire, do as I say*. Ultimately scenes two and three are efforts to adapt to the voice of the other, the first swing of the mirror and the most influential one.

The effect of these scenes lies beyond their linear plot. No matter how ridiculous Xuthus is, no matter how blind the servant proves, their imaginary solutions have crossed the threshold of the symbolic. And vice versa, no matter how wise or

symbolically equipped they are they will always depend on the support of the appearances established in the imaginary. So the vocabulary of the scenes involves us in an exercise of intelligence, senses and established values, the objective of which is not the integrity of the one or the other but the achievement of a 'proficiency' in focusing on separate issues for which *cross-eyed-ness* is sometimes an advantage. It prepares the ground for the resolution of the drama. It obeys the basic rule of the imaginary: what you see depends on where you are looking from and what you expect to see.

I will discuss two symmetrical situations. The first one concerns the pair Xuthus-Ion anticipating Creusa's reaction. The second concerns the group Creusa-old servant-chorus anticipating the previous pair's actions. The two pairs are engaged in an ongoing imaginary dialogue in which we discern an infinite number of similarities between 'characters', words, structural positions, potentials. There is also an equivalence of roles and polarities (parent-child, master-servant, man-woman etc.) and modes of talking (e.g., persuasion) and styles, all of which we could describe as an extensive *copying* going back and forth or round and round. The key secret of the structure of scenes two and three is *fascination* in the most analytic sense of the term. It is the connotative, evocative similarity of the poetry that only realises a fraction of its promising lines and lets the other run parallel ad infinitum.

The common basis of the two scenes is the intersubjective relationship: me-other. The intended destruction of the other via/ because of the fascinating similarity (perhaps this touches upon the nature of signification here) only conceals the fact that friend and enemy share terrifying similarities. We will only select a limited number of mirrorings, mainly those that exemplify the ego - other dialectic, the logic of the imaginary, the power of anticipation in the two scenes and the limitations of the imaginary.

Father and Son: A New Beginning

Swing of the mirror: the first man you see is you son⁸¹. The closed world of two, the self-sufficient universe of the parent and the child is constructed before our eyes. Freud spoke of the narcissism of the parent born again with the child [Freud 1914, p. 85]. Usually it is the mother we are thinking of when we are referring to *that* pair. In this scene the natural mother-child relationship is imitated by the king who goes beyond the absolutely necessary recognition of a symbolic pact. Like the Minister in Poe's story Xuthus adopts a feminine position. He hides his gift, anticipates his wife's reaction and misuses the privilege of the ruler to nominate in the symbolic, to create by law. He is drawn into a complicated account of the past and defends his secret as if to safeguard an illicit satisfaction of an immediate desire in the present.

Xuthus and Ion are left to deal with necessity: Apollo's oracle brings together a master and a slave who must agree upon a relation that satisfies a god's desire and must accommodate their new roles and their identity to that desire. The pair will drag the explanations of a natural relationship out of their obscure past, the imaginary space available for innovation. Thus they produce their own certainties to the point of dissociating them from their real source, obedience to the voice of the Other⁸².

Xuthus and Ion are faced with an unaccounted (occulted) transformation and with the order to interpret it:

slave--> receiver of oracle--> child of king

childless king--> receiver of oracle--> father of child

Mutual recognition is appealing for its immediacy. It concerns the fulfilment of desire suddenly made present, touch-able. The embrace of the father and the son is the proof of it. Beyond the divine imperative the agreement to be father-son emerges as a kind of panacea for all worries. It enables them to remedy a prior error, each one his own,

⁸¹ Xuthus paternity is mostly dismissed by scholars in view of the last settlement of the truth of Apollo's paternity. Echoing Ferguson [1969] seems to take Euripides' rationality for granted and claims that Xuthus is a more possible father than Apollo: of course Ion is the spiritual child of Apollo but that's as far as their relationship goes. I mention this 'maverick' article for seeing something there, the very fact that the symbolic status of paternity will never be challenged.

⁸² The symbolic necessity, that is, for a child and an heir.

Xuthus the folly of youth and Ion the loss of purity and innocence from the previous encounter with Creusa. The new beginning is a plunge in naivety, the undoing of the past. This is, I believe, the most outstanding and spectacular achievement of the pact. It allows two different people's losses to be placed one upon the other and vanish. The rite of passage, a celebration of coming into adulthood and the acceptance by the male society will be built on the ignorance/ repression of the only thing that could possibly sustain it, sexuality. Xuthus does not explain how one is borne or becomes a man or an Athenian. When Ion's questions about his place in the adult world become too pressing, Xuthus gives him another aspect of the imaginary, a unique show of *power* concentrated in a single masterful line:

παῦσαι λόγων τῶνδ', εὐτυχεῖν δ' ἐπίστασο (l. 650) [stop it, learn to be happy] which will fix the child for ever in an attempt to comply to the father's⁸³ desire.

The gains of the new order are indisputably appealing. The risks are worth taking. Xuthus and Ion construct a thousand and one lies to convince each other that this is a genuine one in a million coming together of a lost father and son while ignoring the fact that it is *not to each other* but *to the world* that they should account for their relationship. Closed in a narcissistic world of two the father and the son will invent myths and persuasions.

Two myths for Ion

Xuthus' opening appeal accomplishes a difficult task. It evokes the 'mother' and the 'father' for as long as it is necessary to capture Ion's desire. He then represses both parents and takes their place.

If images have power⁸⁴ then Ion's enchantment depends entirely on the success of Xuthus' gestures. He enters the scene jubilant, confident, arms spread to embrace the

⁸³ The figure Xuthus the stupid king is fascinating. There are times when I think that he might actually be the ultra-clever king who has it all worked out and knows that the best way to play the game of the throne of Athens is to pretend to be a complete fool. A line like 'stop it, learn to be happy' at least deserves such a thought.

⁸⁴ We are talking power in the imaginary of course, the reawakening of the expected image. Lacan gives a nice example of 'love at first sight' right after explaining 'being in love': "Remember the first

first man who was never embraced by a mother. The double *imaginary captation*, like love at first sight, guarantees in advance the success of his speech which will only elaborate on the key issues of the opening (primordial) image. We usually refer to Xuthus' speech as persuasion. It is not. It is a mutual *seduction*⁸⁵ between two consenting parties in which each seduces the other and himself, each contributing his own image to the world of two.

Motherless birth

Xuthus' appeal responds to Ion's expectations and fears. It evokes the maternal embrace, the order of the god and the abomination of patricide wrapped around Xuthus' storming entry:

ὦ τέκνον, χαῖρ'; ἡ γὰρ ἀρχὴ τοῦ λόγου πρέπουσά μοι [Hail my son, the beginning of speech is fitting] (l. 517); δὸς χερδὲς φίλημά μοι σῆς σώματος τ' ἀμφιπτυχάς [Let me kiss you and embrace you; or as Way suggests: let me fold thy *form* in mine embrace] (l. 519); ὡς τι δὴ φεύγεις με; [Why do you run away from me having recognised me?] [trans. Owen 1939] or, more colourfully: "Doesn't instinct tell you to love me? (l. 525); And to Ion's hostile reception he replies: κτεῖνε καὶ πύμπρη; παρτὸς γάρ, ἦν κτάνης, ἔσει φονεύς [Do your worst, you will have been the murderer of your father] [trans. Owen 1939] or, according to Vellacott [trans., 1954]: Very well, kill me - but you will have to bury me too: I am your father (l. 527).

The appeal is a mixture of power and resignation. The king makes himself vulnerable. He runs the risk of making himself ridiculous by surrendering to a young slave. He gives himself up but the force of his argument is the silent implication of certainty: would I be making myself a fool if I was not sure about it?

time Werther sees Lotte, as she is cuddling a child. It's an entirely satisfying image from the *Anlehnungstypus* on the anaclitic plane [form of narcissistic choice]. It is the way the object coincides with Goethe's hero's fundamental image that triggers off his fatal attachment..." [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 142].

⁸⁵ Seduction is actually a term Lacan uses in relation to narcissism [Lacan:Miller, p. 132].

Ion responds to the mixture of power and vulnerability, the *contingent similarity*⁸⁶ of the present situation with what he expects parental affection to be like. He is caught in the meshes of an anticipated image which he himself has created.

Xuthus responds to the reawakening of his own narcissism. It is a state of creative omnipotence half way between the inimitable female childbirth and Zeus's producing offspring out of his head. For the sake of acquiring a child Xuthus will go through the 'labour' of persuading/seducing Ion and will give himself the opportunity to realise the dream of creating 'out of nothing'. In creating Ion, Xuthus is fascinated by his own power. The king can do what he likes and what he would have liked. He can change his past as well as the future. He can hope for the symbolic eternity of procreation and the imaginary reparation of the follies of the past. But when he recognises the temple slave as his son he recognises nothing but *the form of the son*. The jubilation of the recognition conceals the truth behind it, the very fact that it could have been any slave and any king in their place.

The fragility of the imaginary returns every time the issue of Ion's real mother is brought up. The unknown woman is banished in the sphere of myth- myth being an imaginative description of a situation but not an explanation. So when Ion insists:

τινὸς δὲ σοι πέφυκα μητρὶς; [who is my mother] (l. 538)

Xuthus can only offer a variety of excuses. One dragged out of the loss of memory: I do not remember, I was drunk; another supported by the far more interesting satisfaction of his need: " *I have no idea*" / " *Apollo said nothing?*" / " *I didn't ask, I was so delighted*" (l. 539-41).

But for 'common' reason birth is the beginning of things 'out of something', a maternal womb and before that a union. Inadvertently Xuthus puts himself in a difficult position by insisting on the naturalness of their bond. When Ion insists '*who is my mother, did I spring out of the earth?*' the limits of reason are stretched so much that Xuthus is forced almost to admit that Ion came from nowhere: οὐ πέδον τίκτει τέκνα [the earth does not bear children] (l. 542). In face of Xuthus' apparent difficulty to establish the facts we can always consider Ion's '*did I spring from the earth?*' as the return of the

⁸⁶ The new father is graceful and strong- like Apollo; he appears to be the union of opposites that Ion expects to find in a father.

sexual repressed, the sneering reproach that logically follows : 'Xuthus fertilised the earth'.

But Xuthus is determined to ignore his ignorance and the difficulties of presenting Ion with an unusual birth. He defines a territory in which reason applies. Everything that matters falls within it. Outside it is 'nothing' and 'nothing' cannot be taken into account, even when it is Ion's mother. Scornful and optimistic, he rejects the 'casualties' of reason with devastating simplicity: if it does not fit in, reject it, ignore it, repress it: *τερφθεις τοῦτο, κείν' οὐκ ἠρόμην*. [I didn't ask, I was so happy] (l. 541)

The father of guilt

The second characteristic of Xuthus' appeal is guilt: *'you will be polluted and a patricide if you kill me'* (l. 527) he says, throwing Ion into an anxiety of avoiding a crime he has not yet committed. As future father blessed with the consent of the god, Xuthus introduces yet another difficult relationship in which Ion passes from the hands of one father to another. There is no choice between the consent of the two fathers. He is only left with a responsibility: to obey their expressed desire. Xuthus' intervention again strikes the correct note, sending off the resonances of 'you would be a parricide' to all directions⁸⁷. The new father puts his finger on the heart of Ion's fear, the ambivalence toward Apollo. He offers a trick of magic for an answer. When he proposes 'be my son and you will be everything' he captures Ion's oscillating desire: I am nothing / I am everything at the point of the unexpressed narcissistic wish to be the world for another human being. When Xuthus announces 'I am your father' he offers much more than social status. He teaches Ion how satisfaction works (learn to be happy), how best to capture it when it comes your way. Nothing and everything are split, and in the middle- out of nowhere and out of the earth⁸⁸- springs a flesh and blood father who already loves beyond belief.

⁸⁷ The guilt associated with the dead father is associated with aggressive impulses against him; see for instance Freud [1913, pp. 201-8].

⁸⁸ Xuthus emerges from the underground oracle of Trophonius - so metaphorically speaking he does come out of the earth (l. 393).

The new father challenges Ion's aggression. 'You would be a parricide' summarises the futility of his anger and his ambivalence and projects them to the future. What would be the use of killing a man/father, an effigy of Apollo? What difference would it make apart from confirming Ion as an outcast. What reasons could any one have for killing a stranger? Deep down Xuthus' plea is quite simple and effective. You cannot hate me, so love me. You've got nothing against me, so love me. You've got nothing better than me, so love me.

The relation to Apollo is not resolved. Like the unknown mother it, too, is made to pass underneath. All questions related to Apollo are wiped out. It does not really matter whether the god gets rid of a potential embarrassment or an aspiring rival, whether he cares or not. Xuthus invites Ion to deal with it by cutting off the symbolic and imaginary links with the oracle and by presenting it as no-choice he really takes away the image of the world as Ion knows it. Ion gets a glimpse of the fearful reality: sent away from the oracle, deprived even of the temporary certainty of Delphi, he loses all reflections of himself in society. At that point, the representation of the Promised Land in the speech of another father sustains him for the transition. Xuthus 'imaginises' reality, creates the world, for as long as it is necessary for Ion to take it upon himself and defend it and begin to recognise his form in it. Xuthus knows how to make himself an indispensable part of the new image.

We may summarise the situation in the following way: half way between Apollo's first ever expressed desire and the appearance of an earthly father Ion is introduced in the symbolic and the imaginary. The new father offers him the world in return for his consent. He fills the puppet-servant with alluring promises of an earthly kingdom and recognises 'something' which makes 'you' valuable and indispensable. Xuthus has the advantage of present and future over the imaginary mother and Apollo. He is *present* while they are not, sees in Ion what Ion cannot see in himself and promises to satisfy Ion's desire to know more in due time, in the *future*.

The new father proposes a double repression: of the god and the mother. The mother is next to impossible to find, absent from the father's representations⁸⁹. The god is indifferent and inaccessible. 'Buried together' the mythical parents, Apollo and the

⁸⁹ In the previous scene we said that Creusa conveys the symbolic father in her speech. Now in a symmetrical and opposite way the mother is missing from the father's speech.

mother, the old family, will merge in a symbolic way as the return to either is now out of the question. 'I am your father' is predominantly symbolic but under the idiosyncratic present circumstances it sounds more like 'I am your only link with the world'. Consequently, 'be my son' means acknowledge my omnipotence, be the mirror of my power, rely on me.

Xuthus' successful appeal depends on two factors that exceed his eloquence and perhaps his intelligence. He invests the father-son bond with the mirage of a promised land and the mirage of death, with the echoes of the mother and the father respectively.

Inventing memory

Memory, thought and the senses co-operate in creating firm realities or firm illusions. Together Xuthus and Ion embark on proving the naturalness of their bond. Any rational investigation of their relationship would consider the possibility of an error but this is the one option they cannot afford. Reason is subjected to necessity. It is deprived of its dialectic openness and is directed towards finding exactly what it had set out to find. The permanent characteristic of this peculiar reason is that while it stays clear of contractions it creates paradoxes that go unnoticed.

The interpretation of the oracle defies conventional reason, not because it involves belief but because it is like a conclusion that precedes its logical support. To accept the oracle means to be able to translate it into common sense. Because it is equivocal it is always correct. To follow either of its meanings implies conforming to the spirit of the oracle, to proceed with respect, and follow the chosen meaning with consistency. Xuthus respects the oracle but he also seems to choose a slightly different way of adapting to its spirit. He makes extensive use of the form of divine duplicity, replicates it in his speech and resorts to an either/or type of statement when it would be enough just to admit his ignorance or assert his faith in Apollo.

The following account is a 'quick' presentation of the series of operations involved in Xuthus' and Ion's attempt to find conclusive evidence of their natural relation. In a psychoanalytic way the real issue of backtracking one's thought would involve, if it

were faithful to the principles of logic, re-discovering the origins of discourse. In our play this would lead Ion and Xuthus back to the first moment of the meeting, in mutual *aporia* and reliance on the voice of the god. But in order to 'make sense' the limitless message must be delimited. Junctions of meaning emerge in the text, moments of duplicity, *aporia* and hesitation, points at which meaning 'bifurcates' and could have regressed to ignorance. But they are under pressure to find something there. We know that they err, and in due time Ion will learn about their error. But this is at the far end of the play, a form of *reparation* for faulty reasoning. Before that, reason must be followed to a first logical end, the fault must be 'constructed'. Ion's departure from the oracle must first be accomplished in some sort of alienation, in losing himself in someone else's reason and vice versa.

The first operation of reason is a tautology. It is a self-referential assurance of prudence (*sophrosyne*) which shows what 'to rely on one's own means' involves. *Sophrosyne* is not chosen at random. Nor is it only the reply to Ion's 'Are you mad?' It is aimed at the past, the territory of the folly of youth. 'Sophrosyne' is the trademark of the older Xuthus who seizes the opportunity to bring the past into present and put them both right.

The following trajectory is formed: *sophrosyne* guarantees certainty in general; certainty in general guarantees certainty in particular cases; if someone is *sophron* in general he is *sophron* in particular cases; a *sophron* person is not insane, he holds onto something that is dearest (l. 521) and does not mistrust the god (l. 555). *Sophrosyne* is the stepping stone from faith to appropriation, from being given to claiming something or someone for oneself⁹⁰.

Within the range of its applications *sophrosyne* 'migrates' freely from one particular strand of meaning to another. When the question is raised of whether the king has understood correctly what he was told, a tautology based on this useful prudence

⁹⁰ The lines I refer to are: Ion: χαίρομεν, σὺ δ' εὖ φρονεῖ γε, καὶ δὴ ὄντ' εὖ πράξομεν (l. 517) / I: εὖ φρονεῖς μὲν; ἢ σ' ἐμνηνεν θεοῦ τις, ὦ ξένε, βλάβη; Xuth: σωφρωνῶ, τὰ φίλταθ' εὐρὼν οὐ φευγεῖν ἀφίεμαι (l. 519-21) / Ion: οὐ φίλῳ φρενῶν ἀμούσους καὶ μεμνηνотας ξένους (l. 526) / and later in the text, Ion: ἐμφορον ἢ κατοῖνον ὄντα (l. 552) / and in the end, Ion: τῷ θεῷ γοῦν οὐκ ἀπιστεῖν εἰκός, Xuth: εὖ φρονεῖς ἄρα (l. 557)

emerges at the level of the general argument: Xuthus cannot have misunderstood the oracle because he is *sophron* and is *sophron* because he has not misunderstood the oracle. Yet the tautology goes unnoticed because its terms are separated by faith and by allowing the social aspect, the aspect of prospective well-being and happiness, to determine its strength. We could therefore say that the first step away from the confusing oracle and into conventional reason involves two shifts: conclusion before the argument and tautology instead of dialectic. The future is reinforced by the regrets of the past. The past is put right by the decisive intervention in the future. The imaginary is being reconstituted for the sake of the desire to put it right by authority and power. Misrecognitions proliferate.

The next step (lines 528-534) guarantees that the newly derived prospect of happiness is not swallowed up by doubt. Xuthus and Ion see eye-to-eye. The joint effort to salvage the meaning of the oracle shows that. One thing that the imaginary cannot accommodate is sheer persistent stubborn doubt.

When Xuthus claims his son on the basis of having heard the divine oracle, Ion threatens to throw him into confusion by claiming: ἔσφαλ' ἄνιγμι' ἀκούσας, [You heard some riddle and misunderstood it] to which he answers: οὐκ ἄρ' ὀρθ' ἀκούομεν. [Did we not hear correctly] [trans. Owen 1939] or [we heard correctly] [trans. Vellacott 1954].

They 'find' each other *in doubt* but doubt is what they must dispel, trying to eliminate what brings them together, pure chance, and replace it with something different, a tangible certainty. Even if Xuthus doubts for a second Ion salvages his deteriorating enthusiasm by a generous act of self-sacrifice, in which, true to the spirit of all first meetings, he places himself at the gap of knowledge: 'let us try a different approach' (l. 543), he proposes. Thus the uninterrupted pattern of short questions and answers in which he seemed to participate reluctantly, is at a certain point (l. 530) turning into a sequence of prompting questions - which becomes obvious later (l. 544). In fact it is Ion who 'foists' on to Xuthus the idea of having had a child in the past. This perhaps explains why he is easily convinced by no evidence, in the most amazing way, putting himself in the place of the missing evidence, and thus taking on the responsibility not of being convinced but of accepting the image of himself coming back from an imaginary childhood. The pair of them resort to a trick: they exchange certainties for

doubts and they exchange certainties between themselves. Ion pledges his only asset, his presence, and the deal is sealed.

When father and son go over the same message trying to find other tangible evidence of a natural relationship they perform an amazing 'tour de force'. Language at its best articulates the aporia of finding nothing concrete there and the desire 'to find something' against all odds. Thus when Ion wonders: am I yours, what did Apollo say? Xuthus replies:

Xuth: παῖδ' ἐμὸν πεφυκέναι. [Having being mine]

Ion: σὸν γεγῶτ', ἢ δῶρον ἄλλως; [Your son by birth, or merely a gift?]

Xuth: δῶρον, ὄντα δ' ἐξ' ἐμοῦ. [A gift, yes, but mine by birth too] (l. 536-7)

This paradoxical statement does not stand out in an environment of normal discourse. It is part of a paradoxical conversation in which the determination of meaning resembles the play of repression and the return of the repressed. Xuthus' language struggles at the edge of a conscious ego-centred certainty but it cannot stay clear of the ambiguities inherent in the words. *Recognition*, for example, with its purely legal and its purely sensory aspects is one of them. Another one is 'ῥυσιάζω', a. to seize property in distraint and hold it till safe, b. to be a robber (Owen, p. 107), the unfortunate term that Xuthus uses in order to claim that the child belongs to him only. When followed to their logical extreme such terms lead to the opposite of certainty: if Xuthus is not a robber then certainly he 'holds' the child for someone else. But Ion is no one's child. At best then he admits that he is the temporary guardian of this child of no-one. The whole issue is settled when he appropriates what belongs to no one.

When no such 'subtlety' is available and the duplicity of meaning is all too obvious language is pushed to the limits. Xuthus' most honest attempt to verbalise the impossible results in splitting the entangled *pephykenai* into *mine and not mine*. By splitting the rational from the irrational, the explicable from the inexplicable they can treat each separately, and gradually reject one of them. '*Pephykenai*' restates the problem of meaning in terms of literal and metaphorical 'genesis'. It summarises the failure of thinking as it copies the ultimate postulate, the infallibility of the oracle. Mine and not mine, *both A and B*, is the prototype of ambivalence of thought and childhood. A first or inconceivable state of mind, a mode of thinking suitable for gods, who, irrespective of the outcome, are never proved wrong. But mortals cannot live in

this no meaning/all meaning limbo- this has been the problem all along, the painful suspension of social, emotional and other dependencies on the blessing of Apollo. For mortals *a choice of meaning* is a vital choice⁹¹.

Thus *both A and B*⁹² necessitates splitting and repression of one of its senses. That's what they do. And in doing so they obey the spirit of the oracle, which, like the superego-father orders:" 'You ought to be like this' (like your father).... 'you may not be like this' (like your father)" [Freud 1923, p. 374] which allows his 'children', both Ion and Xuthus, to interpret in good faith but not to live like him - in a mythical, Apollonian, non-contradictory universe. It could be said that sentences like this touch upon the darkest points of 'being', quickly closed off by the infallibility of the god and the human attitude to it: the only option offered to man is to interpret, not to refuse. If, therefore, piety is a form of affirmation it is directly related to the generation of meaning. 'Belief' in god, however, the synthesis of knowledge and ignorance, will always maintain a link with the repressed half of meaning, a minimum touch with the irrational necessary to undermine and restrain the authority of pure reason.

In the same way ignorance is contextualised and they trick themselves: having explained ignorance away does not necessarily mean that they have gained knowledge, especially when ignorance is being renamed 'not being sure'. Again, partial ignorance is born out of total ignorance, with the addition of precarious reason. This is the significant though imperceptible change that underlines the explanation of 'self-birth':

A story is made up based on a simple operation:

total ignorance--> split ignorance--> insertion of reason--> suppression of ignorance, a normal breathing pattern, the *to and fro* of human desire that must accede to the real world. Having already been on such a course- due to their fascination with each other's presence- a refusal to interpret would be equal to death, to an absolute, gratuitous, suicidal negation of everything. It would return them to non-meaning, to all non-meanings encountered during the investigation of reason and to the social non-

⁹¹ We are reminded here of Lacan's description of alienation and the inevitable choice of meaning that spells out the destiny of the speaking subject. (See fn 28)

⁹² True to Apollo's 'duplicity' at which the discourse would have stopped if it was their intention to recognise its origin/beginning and not to exceed it; oracle = knowledge + ignorance.

being of the childless and the parentless. So they marvel at *tyche*, the chance that brought them together (l. 538), and they begin to undo it. Together they break it into self-explanatory pieces, in which they match the contingent details of a possible past with the raised expectations of a possible future. Now the Other's desire, Apollo's voice, is not necessary any more.

"Did you have some love affair?"

"I was young once, and foolish" (l. 545) and then:

"Were you ever in Delphi before?"

"Yes, I came before for the Bacchic mysteries" (l. 552)

"Yes. They were in a state of religious frenzy" (l. 553)

These answers provide the co-ordinates of time and space for Ion to be free-born. Reason is clouded by drunkenness and Bacchic frenzy (l. 553), completing the paradoxical equations of the entire speech: then it was folly, now it's reason. To use reason now for what was foolish then is to make sense out of nonsense.

Is this not executed in a true Delphian spirit? Does this not exactly touch upon the slight difference/similarity of 'what does not make sense' being supernatural or stupid? Finally reason is celebrated in the same triumphant spirit, for having reached the foretold end: *"Now you see things in their proper light"* [trans. Owen 1939] (l. 557) or according to Vellacott [trans. 1954]: *"Now you are seeing reason"*.

Having managed to set the irrational aside Xuthus and Ion now move firmly into the region of reason and rationalise the latter's birth by having the father visiting Delphi before Athens, though some doubt remains in the ex-servant's appreciation of good luck:

"After all, what more could I wish for - than a father who is descended from Zeus?" (l. 558)

Ion's desire to be the son of Apollo disappears but we know that what is out of sight is not necessarily out of mind. At the same time Xuthus may be made to look ridiculous but his authority will never be openly undermined. In addition to his emotional involvement he will always be Ion's symbolic father because he is unquestionably the king and the agent of authority.

We could summarise the situation in the following way. The recognition of the father and son goes beyond the mutual sanctioning of a symbolic pact. They work together

on building their relationship on the reawakening of narcissism. To a great extent they are successful but at the expense of repressing Ion's previous desires, the dream of the noble mother and the father-god. Xuthus offers and demands total commitment and total love and leaves no room for doubts. Once a mutual commitment to affirming their relationship is established, the ways of doing it follow naturally. All it takes is fixing one's eyes on it and being determined not to give in when ignorance, the lack of evidence, threatens to bring the negotiation of the deal to a stop. For us, the observers, their recognition is valid for its socio-legal aspect. The rest may be called untrue, lies, deceptions, blindness. But is it not the case that any relationship is something more than meets the eye for the participants themselves? Are they not asked to invest more than their pure reason? We are offered a good look into an order that would merit the name 'subjective'. From outside it certainly looks far-fetched and ridiculous. From inside it is invested with love and devotion.

With a swift move Xuthus severs Ion's link with his past. Alienated in the new order the desire for Apollo and the mother desire succumbs to reality. From now on, they form Ion's *impossible desire*, the utopian return to the oracle and the impossibility of finding the woman who bore him, once he is in Athens. The present lesson, however, is simple. All one has to do is *not* fix one's eyes on that loss. All one has to do is fix one's eyes on what one is bound to gain instead.

'Entering the world' is no straightforward business. It involves assuming the other's desire and introjecting the other's word, a process which, Lacan assures us, does not happen in one go. Here we encounter the difficulties inherent in the task. What is the practical value of assuming the other's desire? What are the consequences of accepting the other's naming 'you will be my son' and duly replying 'and you will be my father'? When is it appropriate to exclaim: I did not want to do it, I was forced to? Unfortunately, no concrete advice is given on how to cope with reality! One is basically blind- or has to play it by ear. Ion, for instance, is supposed to know what it is like to live from day to day, satisfy other people's desires and be happy for their happiness. When it comes to his own he finds it very difficult to conform to Xuthus' desire with the same ease.

An unanswerable question emerges here: "Isn't that what you wanted?" Ion had wished for a better luck and now he discovers that it goes with a certain price. All the means developed, all the tricks, all truths and all lies are, for the moment at least, ways

of bringing one's fading desire into alignment with the chance at hand. All one learns is that desires are satisfied in the world, via the other who, just like you, has desires that must be satisfied. At this point Xuthus' intervention is masterfully accurate. By claiming that Ion is everything he wants he achieves this difficult 'via the other' in a perfectly narcissistic way. It captures the child's imagination by feeding him with details matching his ambitions and his lack and by acknowledging him as the equal part of a self-contented pair. Narcissism satisfied entails a saturated subject-object relation. In utter stupidity or in utter cleverness Xuthus provides just that by admitting that his desire is Ion.

Xuthus' Desire

What is Xuthus' desire? We can assemble our answer from his discourse. Is he not the child who regresses to his past in order to find his object and enclose it in his contented silence? Is he not the man who regresses into beyond-memory (drunkenness) to affirm his masculinity and then rediscover this affirmation in others? Xuthus does not want to be the passive spectator of the times, he wants to be *an active participant*. Indications come from everywhere: from the fact that he was a spectator at the oracle of Trophonius and left empty-handed; from the fact that he can recognise and loathes the passive position as soon as he abandons it; from the fact that another man in a symmetrical situation, the servant, will try to escape from his very nature and will fail. Let us say therefore that Xuthus wants to escape his own nature and that his nature always returns to him in various metonymic ways.

Xuthus' basic pattern of behaviour is simple. He excludes his passivity and his ignorance and includes his happiness⁹³. He passes on his ignorance to both Ion and Creusa and essentially he behaves the same to both.

The rule of investment works here. A withdrawal of libido from Creusa turns her, the gift of gratitude of yesterday, into the surplus of today. Gratitude is cancelled. The investment is cancelled. The woman that does not produce a son has no place in the

⁹³ This account is based on Freud's love and hate as modes of response to the external world. Exclude and include describe a basic mode of behaving along the lines of good/bad.

father's world. So first Xuthus reduces Creusa to an empty indifferent form, and then he anticipates (or agrees to) hostility and envy coming from her. Because this is a game of appearances the other's opinion matters. In his wife's anticipated envy Xuthus glimpses the reality of his activity and his potency⁹⁴. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Xuthus' self-contained (autoerotic) fascination with his son is guarded by an anal-sadistic hostility towards the external world. Xuthus the eternal child will remain for ever attached to his little secret and its assurances coming from the internal bliss and the external envy. Xuthus will never be told the truth but he does not care either.

Planning to keep Creusa in the dark Xuthus falls victim to his own passion. But there is no one to see that for the moment apart from the spectator, the one in the very position he detests. An interesting development occurs in terms of *lie, truth, appearance*, not much different in principle from the operation of reason we saw earlier.

Xuthus' s plan of deception is to pretend to be what he really is: childless. His self deception, then, is to mistake his consciousness/certainty for reality: he pretends not to be what he is (childless), while he thinks he knows what he really is (father of a child). Here, only an objective witness or a spectator could really make the equation *secret=ignorance*. Only the spectator can detect his lie and by poetic licence Xuthus will want to eliminate every spectator and every witness of his recognition of the child and keep it a secret.

Xuthus reconciles appearances by repelling his ignorance and looking no further: He wants to be a father, he thinks and knows he is a father, he chooses to appear as not-father. *He reconciles his truth, the deepest narcissistic complacent desire, and his appearance, the display of authority and masculinity, with a lie - as the gap can only be bridged in a make-believe way*⁹⁵. It is the same ignorance he refuses to acknowledge that he passes on to others, the one he bequeaths to Ion about his mother

⁹⁴ In other words Creusa's envy is a way of making his 'object' valuable: if she (or any other) envies me that means I have/own something enviable. It does not matter that it is his own speculation that he projects.

⁹⁵ At best Xuthus will always be a paradoxical father, the unwilling father he always was, the drunken father-without-knowing that is now transformed into the not-knowing father.

or the one he shifts onto Creusa's shoulders about her future status. Ironically, he behaves to friends and enemies in the same way as he regresses to the folly of his youth, the metaphorical drunkenness, the euphoria that blurs vision and critical judgement.

Like the minister in Poe's story Xuthus will be the victim of his own greed. He does not acknowledge the child's symbolic position, he does not present it to the world. He keeps it all to himself, unused, passive, in limbo, pretending that nothing has changed. In a closed, secret world of narcissism Xuthus has expelled the bad gift of ignorance and lack and in its place he has instituted the good gift of fulfilment and completeness. This is the ultimate narcissism, the secret order itself and the desire to preserve it. The ultimate narcissism is the secret knowledge of 'I am not what I seem to be', a difficult gain worth taking the risk of making oneself ridiculous by attempting to embrace a stranger.

I said earlier that Xuthus *expels* ignorance. Like another Apollo he 'disseminates' the message in the world but he really scatters it, fragments it into pieces so that Ion and Creusa will have to put them together in order to find out what it means. They both receive the blindness, speechlessness, immobility and passivity bequeathed by the father. Xuthus passes the buck of ignorance 'to whom it may concern'.

Ion receives the ignorance about the mother. The privileged position of the heir of Athens, descendant of Zeus and son of a warrior father does not automatically entail her presence. *Ignorance* is now established as the signifier of lack.

Creusa receives another form of ignorance, a double one. Both the indifference and the silent hatred of the satisfied husband. If desire is first recognised in the other it might be the case that Creusa recognises her desire for a child in Xuthus arriving there first. But it is all Xuthus' doing for the moment, Creusa's interpretation and her desire comes only later. Xuthus' master-stroke is again inspired by his narcissism. He introduces, or better, circulates not 'a child' but 'a missing child', an unknown 'X', a pure form to *captate* any desire. His secrecy, the speechlessness he imposes on Ion and the chorus, compacts his guilt and gives, to whom it may concern, a fearful ghost-of-a-child to deal with. The evocative power of the 'missing' human being hits the spot (or should we say the eye?). The missing child like the moving figure behind the curtain that *is and is not* there, a shadow behind a curtain, but most of all *the hole*, the absence in the imaginary and the symbolic that only a father can install.

In the end the king-father is duped. Ignorance returns to him but in a different form. The son takes his place and 'expels' him from the symbolic circuit of the Athenian throne. But he is not affected by that because as he is wrapped up in the blindness of his good luck and no one bothers to 'open his eyes'⁹⁶.

In this part we discussed the recognition of the father and the son as a case of imaginary captation. The first man Xuthus sees captivates his eye. The rest is easily invented. Although the symbolic value of the recognition is never undermined, the imaginary investment of the bond is very interesting as it depends on a series of make-believe initiatives. Xuthus' desire, is satisfied by turning a blind eye to inconsistencies and expelling any remaining ignorance. Ion, the object of affection, receives some of it. Creusa too. This is how self-centred narcissistic satisfaction works - for everyone.

Another Beginning?

Scene Three is a new beginning. It is a revision of a life haunted by death and the breaking of a silence equivalent to death in the making. One cannot help thinking that deep down the outbreak of disaster must have a healing effect on Creusa. It is difficult to think of death and mourning as salvation but who is more dead than she, burdened with the heavy legacy of the sacrificing father and the women of her line who always sacrifice their lives?

Scene Three explores a variety of issues. The dialogue parts form a fascinating reply to Xuthus' projected aggression. Creusa's monologue explores the meaning of death in a different but equally fascinating way. We will discuss her monologue in a separate part. For the moment let us say that it falls on deaf ears as the immediate receivers, the chorus and the old man, are far too preoccupied with their part in the adventure to listen to what any one else is saying.

The dialogue parts, lines 725-858 and 923-1047, meet Xuthus' plans for the future in anticipation. Either way, question and answer, situation and counter-situation, are

⁹⁶ This is actually a Modern Greek expression which, in the spirit of the continuity of language, describes very accurately what is involved in disillusionment.

conceived and prepared in an utterly imaginary space. Still, what Creusa's plan lacks in authority it has in effectiveness. It will be her idea that will bring everything to light. And still, it will always be the wrong action. Despite the fact that scene three can be accounted for almost exclusively as a mirror of scene two it appears sharper, deadlier, sillier and more excessive. Some would even say unjustified. The old servant is traditionally ridiculous and short-sighted and Creusa is traditionally classed among the 'bad women'.

We will discuss only certain elements of scene three, those that supplement and expand on the findings of scene two and account for the effect of excess. My fascination really lies with the desire of the old servant and the chorus. When all is said and done their desire is not satisfied. They are left out and they find themselves in square one. They do not seem to move like the other characters, they do not seem 'to profit' from the on-going negotiation of meaning. Is this because they are real mediators? Real ambassadors of the other with no desire of their own? I think not. Their fascination and their wholehearted involvement leave no doubt that they, too, have aspirations when the ghost of the 'missing child' passes in front of their eyes. By chance or divine providence Creusa and Ion will meet their fate. *They* will not. Their time *never* comes. Neither as life nor as death, and they are suspended in waiting for the next chance to come along, nursing 'unacted desires', having changed places with Creusa-in-waiting. The chorus and the old man are to Creusa what Xuthus is to Ion, the receiver of the surplus and blindness and failure.

In the following part I discuss the chorus's function and desire, the servant's function and desire and the some elements of the pact between Creusa and the servant. This part is written with 'the other in mind'⁹⁷. Two structures support scene three. The interior intersubjective economy of love and solidarity and the response to the signifiers 'child' and 'father' bequeathed by the previous scene. Creusa and her friends develop Xuthus' little plot to perfection and to its logical end: death. The previous situation is symmetrically reversed. They start from the zero point of an imminent

⁹⁷ We will not always be referring explicitly to the similarities with the previous scene.

death. They are the unprivileged and the weak. They have no say and no future, they do not even have a share in good luck. So they create it⁹⁸.

The Chorus as Mirror

The first part of the scene, lines 725-858, is a lesson in death and love. It is a beautiful play of the mirrors. The chorus and the old man, a multitude of faces and voices, speak in unison, and their agreement on the important issues is as compelling as the content of their advice. Reading the lines one gets the impression that everything happens very quickly and Creusa is thrust into a demanding position of public responsibility just before she has time to think about it. The urgency of the matter sets the priorities: urgency over thoroughness, quick action over complete thinking. Any remaining doubts are dealt with by the devastating simplicity of the proposed plan: to deal death before the other. The definiteness of the solution leaves no room for after-thoughts, the hasty anticipation guarantees it, the inspiration from the other confirms it and the primitiveness of 'expelling' the foreign body endows it with the automatism of a natural reflex: at the end of the day, what is one supposed to do when one's life is in danger?

The chorus and the old servant take it upon themselves to declare their allegiance to their queen, to choke her with love, to alert her to danger and to lead her to a glorious death. Behind the aspirations of heroism, the concern for Athens and the welfare of Erectheus' family, the vocabulary of favour and return of favour and eager sacrifice must always remind us of the darker motives Lacan discerns in the aggressivity of

⁹⁸ Ion's institution in Athens would have meant Creusa's social death. Thus when I am saying that Creusa's party carries Xuthus' plan to the limit I mean that they translate the social death into actual death. Along the same lines they imitate Xuthus perfectly. The king is given a shred of truth and he builds his happiness by himself. He creates. They create accordingly.

However, Creusa is different from everyone else and this must be stressed. In her monologue she addresses herself 'to whom it may concern' and this is something no one else does. We compare scenes two and three along the lines of silence and secrecy (*lathra*).

narcissism and death "even in a relation involving the most Samaritan of aid" [Lacan 1949, p. 6].

The vocabulary of the early lines of scene Three shows that the offer of help, both from the chorus and the old man, reaches the point of excess. While Creusa is almost struck dumb by the shocking news and expresses little more than her devastation in almost inarticulate cries, they manage to figure out both the 'real' story behind the bad news and 'what is to be done'. And they go about it as if it were their own business.

The chorus offer their endless love and support wrapped up in the threat of death: "Well, what are we going to do? It means life or death.... shall we tell her? Or say nothing? What shall we do?...You shall be told, even if I die twice over" (l. 756-760). As for the news: "My lady, you will never hold children in your arms or put them to your breast" (l. 761-2) they are supported by the testimony of their own eyes: "I was there" (l. 781), a fragmented speculative account of the events and, finally, a declaration of lifelong loyalty: "My dear mistress, I will be loyal too; I am with you in this, whether for life or death" (l. 857). The chorus identify with Creusa: you die and we die; or is it we die and you die with us? Either way the question remains: why did they talk?

If they choose to talk it is because there is no dilemma and no choice. There is only punishment: if they speak Xuthus will punish them, if they do not speak and Creusa finds out, she will punish them. Owen comments: "the chorus are reluctant to give information in view of Xuthus' threat, but they begin at once by going beyond what they had heard" [trans. Owen 1939, p. 128]. Beyond what they have heard is their fear. Beyond the most altruistic solidarity there is the most primitive life-preserving egoistic interest. The chorus are safe so long as only one master remains. Any complication of 'Samaritan' love will only cloud the essential truth of their involvement.

Let us treat their intervention as befits their peculiar status. In Lacan's universe a chorus would be the 'polyccephalic' subject with whom one identifies, loses sight of one's defects and glimpses the ego-ideal. Our chorus 'participate' here both with their structural transparency and with their keen ego-driven interest in Creusa's welfare. In the first case they are an ideal mirror. In the second they are ordinary human beings that glimpse virtual realities of satisfaction in the other.

How can they be such a perfect mirror? Simply because they reflect the same thing from both sides, death. If the chorus could speak to Xuthus they would give him the same message they are now giving Creusa. If she were the aggressor they would be on his side. Let us not forget that despite her present misery Creusa participates in the world of the masters and certainly seeks her rightful position in it. The chorus lie or report inaccurately but they reflect- not to say project- what they were threatened with: death.

They imitate the master. Like him they pass on the message that kills to the next in line. The style and the inspiration of their intervention comes from the master. They themselves witness and support their information by their senses. They own up to their act. They do not disown anymore. They appropriate knowledge, fill in the missing links with probabilities, appear disinterested. They do this out of sympathy for the master's house, they even offer to die voluntarily when they are not asked to. They appear to deny any motive other than devotion: *I choose to die if necessary* means I am beyond reward, and this is meant to be recognised as the ultimate proof of disinterestedness and love. 'We will die if necessary'- but what does one die for? Is this the 'I would die for you' of the dedicated lover who neurotically expects to hear the same in reply or is it an act of folly, accepting willingly (suicide) what comes to humans only as dire necessity?

The intervention of the chorus excludes no possibilities. 'Truth' is glimpsed between the lines of dramatic necessity and the folly of women, but its effectiveness, as always, lies with the other. At the junction of scenes two and three the chorus, the mirror of many faces, bequeaths a message so complicated, impersonal and impossible that it really re-instates the duplicity of the divine oracle. Creusa, who, following the chorus, will identify with them, will only be able to make sense of the non-sense (death threat) by resorting to her personal experience.

What is there for the chorus trapped between two deaths? What sort of satisfaction is there apart from survival? They cannot hope for any sort of self-determination since one of the masters will survive anyway. I believe that the 'secret' desire that possibly seeks satisfaction here is a desire to go beyond the master, outwit him or her and transgress their word. But this is exactly what gives the perfect opportunity for identification with Creusa. Let us remember Freud's third mode of identification,

identification based on a common quality. Creusa and the chorus identify on the basis of a desire to transgress the law or go behind its back and on the basis of the death threat.

Behind the perfect solidarity we may glimpse a slightly different reality. The play of appearances and concealed secrets would support that. Have the chorus played god by pushing Creusa to the limit? Do they expect to be rewarded for their favour? Or is it some 'cheap' thrill, that of having their curiosity satisfied, that compels them to break their silence? A little of everything perhaps. We will never be able to know- we do not have enough words! But I think that if we put death and favour, the dominant signifiers of their discourse, together with the fact that there is no disinterested truth or lie we can get the following reading. By their position the chorus can participate in a series of narcissistic satisfactions- all of them being satisfactions of the other, the master to whom they belong. In death, however, a rare possibility emerges, a satisfaction of playing with the other, the master. All are equal in front of death, the absolute master. In view of this Creusa owes them as much as they owe her, life. If it were not for the chorus she would have died. As a true, loyal servant the chorus expose the cannibalistic paradox⁹⁹ of this loyalty: they envy and love Creusa: if they kill her she will remain their eternal (as dead) master and since they have also accepted death they will remain her loyal servants. This is their act of mercy to Creusa. And as they willingly accept their own death, they may cause Creusa's death as well. On the other hand, they reduce her to what they are in order to save her and at last share with her a part of her destiny; but they also reduce her to a mere nobody, a slave. There are some of the virtual positions we are allowed to assume, all reflected later in Creusa's own speech, all inspired by the 'play of mirrors', the essence of the imaginary and the mirage of death behind it.

⁹⁹ This cannibalism would bring us to the first form of identification for which Freud commends: "it can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal. It behaves like a derivative of the first, oral phase of organisation of the libido, in which the object that we long for and prize is assimilated by eating and is in that way annihilated as such. The cannibal, as we know, has remained at this standpoint..." [Freud 1921, p. 135]. I would suggest therefore that the superficial identification of lack and death masks an earlier more primitive form of identification.

The old servant: desire and function

The chorus's self-directed aggression is deflected by the old servant. It is directed outwards: do not die, kill. Already captivated by the exciting news, he extends his solidarity in spontaneous plurals: 'we' are being ridiculed, 'we' are being treated unjustly, 'we' suffer. We? Me, you and the other. Under the urgency of death the servant becomes the 'mouthpiece' of the house of Erechtheus- and he will pay for that. For the moment he directs his suspicious aggression towards the new masters (both Xuthus, who is new because he is *xenos*, and Ion, the new master). After questioning the chorus on Creusa's behalf and receiving unsatisfactory answers -their final 'I cannot tell' (l. 803), he volunteers an explanation of the incredible news, a real *interpretation* of the apparent and the obscure, more consistent with the slave's envy of the master's good fortune rather than with his fondness for Creusa.

The old man's monologue is a masterpiece of speculation, anticipation and projection, comparable only to Xuthus's self assured manners. The fact that Xuthus is the inspiration of this speech becomes apparent from the vehemence of his attack against Xuthus-the-foreigner and the adulterer. Yet he claims: "I am not speaking from any dislike of your husband, but because I love you better" (l. 812). The old man will explain how Xuthus became the father of a slave's child, how he arranged the chance meeting at Delphi, how he planned to 'foist' the illegitimate child on Creusa and how it would have been a lesser disgrace if its mother had at least been freeborn. He then adds one of the most remarkable lines of the play, comparable only to the king's "learn to be happy", he urges Creusa: *δεῖ σε δὴ γυναικεῖόν τι δρᾶν* [do something fit for a woman] (l. 843), amplified with a fierce speech¹⁰⁰.

With the altruistic speech the slave will set a foot at the threshold of freedom, the first and last chance of the old man to 'undo' the consequences of the bad name that goes

¹⁰⁰ Kill your husband and his son, before they put an end to you! Either use a sword, or do it indirectly, or by poison. I mean it, -if you flinch you will lose your own life...I'll help you do it: I can slip in where the boy's preparing the feast and stab him. You've been a good mistress to me, and I owe it to you, if it costs my life. Yes, it's only the name of slave that carries disgrace with it; in every other point a loyal slave is as good as a free man " (l. 843-856).

with slavery. He will stand by Creusa in the preparation of the murder as father and counsellor and he will be given the family heirloom with the poisonous drop as a weapon. He will reach Ion's tent where his eagerness will betray him. He will then renounce his mistress as soon as he is threatened with death. Till the final moment, when his only chance is wasted, he will enjoy the mirage of that chance to the full.

What does the old servant want? What is his desire? He wants to lose his stick! I think he expresses it very clearly upon entry on the scene. Creusa supports the fragile old man and asks him: "Feel the ground with your stick" and he replies: "If I am short-sighted, my stick is blind" (l. 744), in other words 'what use is a stick to a blind man?'. This paradoxical statement summarises his desire, an impossible, unsatisfiable desire. The old man wants to be young. He wants to reverse or undo time. It is because his desire is strictly impossible that it is so valuable. It will let him identify with Creusa, play the father to her, too, envy the good luck of another servant, take part in the killing and even say at a point towards the end of the scene: "I'll carry out my orders, I'm not as young as I was; but when work's to be done I'm young enough, I can laugh at old age..." (l. 1041-1). Indeed it takes a complete fool to get it all wrong as he did, but it takes an ordinary human being at the threshold of death to try it and be fascinated with playing freely with all the chances he comes across. The old man has nothing to lose and in view of that he becomes the best mirror of the master, Xuthus, who sees his desire satisfied in every possible way¹⁰¹. But he is not only 'a bit similar' to Xuthus; he resembles Creusa and Ion as well. The slave is another mirror that is left empty when the image goes.

Deprived of the powers of a master, the slave's desire virtually reveals the shortcoming of desire in general. It 'feeds on' the other's desire, it follows the same course, self-deception concealed. The all too obvious impossibility of satisfaction, the lost cause, make it perfectly clear: any interpretation of desire is personal. Any interpretation is an appeal to the other's desire and wishes to captivate it, own it, possess it, and ultimately justify (in the two senses of the word) the desire of the subject.

¹⁰¹ The chorus who in reverse mode have everything to lose - a simple reversal keep it all in balance.

The slave re-introduces the notions of gratitude and favour, the dependence which Xuthus had managed to disguise under the self-reliance of his own weapons- he owes his life to no one, the servant owes his life to his master. While Xuthus confronts ignorance with power the slave enters the 'have all' game wanting power, starting from the certainty of an absolute disadvantage: I am (born) a slave: un-privileged. He starts from nothing and seeks the permanence of an identity. So when the servant cries 'favour' or 'favour to the wrong person' (Ion) or when he expresses envy of the fellow slave he wishes to locate himself not in the world of exchange for which he is poorly equipped but in the world of favour into which one enters by merit or chance.

The slave is divided between duty and desire: to serve in gratitude for his life as he acknowledges a debt to Creusa's father, or to take the place of the master, be the master and be free. There are two ways of becoming a master: *representing* him and *imitating* him. He fails in both.

The servant imitates the limitless power of the master, the power of life and death. He invests it with the meaning of the current situation and re-sends it to 'whom it may concern'. So he advises Creusa to kill all her enemies, Apollo included. If that were to happen, the guarantor of the slave's favour would be the almighty return of his own good advice and he would have done himself the perfect favour.

The slave's desire backfires: he sends Creusa (the master) to death but then the master orders him to take her place. So he has to accept the death sentence with eagerness or once again renounce the chance of freedom. When caught red-handed the servant will pretend to have been involved in the murder attempt by force. This is the drama of the slave's desire, to glimpse its satisfaction in a moment and lose it, to expel himself from the symbolic and resort to what he hates most in order to save himself, the lack of freedom characteristic of slaves.

Like the master the slave is interested in preserving, manipulating and distorting appearances and he fails beyond belief. He fails to be the representative of the master (Creusa). Having the insignia of the master, the heirloom of Erechtheus, is not enough. *To have* means to know how (not) to use, to be able to brandish the bracelet with the twin drops of blood without spending it. The family heirloom is not a weapon. Its power is only symbolic.

He fails to be 'himself'. The eager slave is a paradox to be detected by another eager slave, Ion. What Ion sees in the fellow slave is the lack of envy for his good fortune: "your good manners do not deceive me", he will say.

The slave wastes his big chance. There is a steady downfall: from wanting to be Creusa's favourite, father and family and friend, to becoming the 'hand' of justice, to seeing himself betrayed by his own bad acting. He wants to cause his happiness in a narcissistic way but he has based that on deception. The reminder of his castrated nature, the inability to cause in an original way reminds him that the joy he would derive would not be his but someone else's: the servant's destiny is to make sure that someone else's happiness/ satisfaction is achieved. In the end he does himself no favour and he is nobody's favourite.

But this is not what hurts more. The slave-as-coward who takes refuge in his true nature or in the convenient appearance of cowardice arrives at the bitter end of having to abandon any aspiration to power. Not only does he accept his failure but he forgoes any claim to *another* nature. The slave does not return to another settlement of appearances as happens with the masters in the end of the play, he returns to square one, having seen his dream demolished. Now it becomes apparent that desire is grounded 'beyond' satisfaction¹⁰². And if it appeared 'satisfiable' for a moment it was only because, blind to the essentially aggressive alienating nature of the identification, he had accepted someone else's desire as his own. On top of that, the worst punishment comes from one's own likeness or from the reversal of one's intentions or from both. Let us endow the slave with a few lines in the first person: In the end I might have done what I wanted to avoid: a favour to the new master. My reversal is my punishment, the rebound of my missed last chance to be rewarded: instead of receiving a reward from my future master someone else is rewarded in my place. It is unfair to reward someone for something he has not done, for being at the right moment at the right place, but I only wish it was me.

¹⁰² In the sense that it is never grounded onto a logical assessment of what is or is not within one's limits.

Creusa and the servant:

As a child-parent pair Creusa and the old servant carry the game of appearances to new standards of excellence. They respond to the 'father' and 'child' projected by the previous scene, they improvise, transgress, anticipate, deceive, rejoice in the future success of their plan. If they ever commit a crime, if their folly comes out more prominently than Xuthus', it is because they pull out all the stops of modesty and moderation, even that last shred that usually urges some kind of precaution- 'what if we fail?' -and makes people plan their retreat.

The following account considers a number of imaginary regressions¹⁰³: the old man's obsession with secrecy (doing everything or going *λάθρα*), the imaginary redefinition of the past and the 'recovery' of the weapon that will kill Ion from the shadows of myth.

'Death' sets a high standard. In a way Creusa and the old man are reminiscent of compulsive gamblers for whom no bet is high enough compared with the thrill of the game. Does it ever occur to them that they are doing just that? That they are bound to lose everything even if they win? That the price is too high to pay? But, then again, isn't that the essence of every neurotic's account, that he or she has always been paying a disproportionately high price for everything? This accumulated injustice is the best cause for action. It is what would keep Creusa and the old man and the chorus together even if they had just met. It is the solidarity of the oppressed. In examining their excessive ways let us keep our eyes fixed on the reality behind wanting to go beyond Xuthus and Apollo. Let that be their stake in the symbolic and the reason for their identification.

The old man excels in his own brand of reasoning. He proceeds from a complete lack of evidence against Xuthus, to digging up the past, to finding evidence of injustice by

¹⁰³ The term regression implies backward movement of sexuality - compared to the forward normalising development. With Creusa refusing sexuality and her and the old man retreating to the ancestral past in order to find a suitable weapon to kill Ion I think that the term is in its 'natural' environment. Regression also implies 'going back' in history- also relevant to our case.

another husband, to punishing the child, to restoring order in the house of Erechtheus without disturbing the *balance of appearances*- the only guarantee of their immunity.

An obsession with doing things in secret (*λάθρα*) emerges. This is the mark of the other's excellence that both leads him on and makes him the better man:

"ἄλλης γυναικὸς παῖδας ἔκκαρπυόμενος λάθρα πέφηνεν, ὥς λάθρα δ', ἐγὼ φράσω ... λαβὼν δὲ δοῦλα λέκτρα νυμφεύσας λάθρα τὸν παῖδα ἔφυσεν... ὃ δ' ἐν θεοῦ δόμοισιν ἄφετός, ὥς λάθοι, παιδεύεται.. [...he goes and secretly breeds children with an other woman... he went behind your back to some slave-woman... for secrecy, the boy is dedicated to service in the temple] (l. 815-825).

And soon after Creusa's first explanations about her secret: "ὦ θύγατερ, ἄρ' ἦν ταυθ' αἶ γ' ἡσθόμην ἐγώ; ... νόσον κρυφαίαν ἦνικ', ἔστενες λάθρα; ... κατ' ἐξέκλεψας πῶς Ἀπόλλωνος γάμους;" [oh my daughter, then that was what I noticed? ... But how did you hide what had happened] (l. 944-6), and when asked about who else knows the truth: "οὐδε ξυνήδει σοι τις εκθεσιν τεκνου; / αἵ ξυμφοραὶ γε καὶ τὸ λανθάνειν μόνον" [doesn't anyone know about it? / Only troubles and stealth do] (l. 956-7).

But it is not troubles and stealth that are the real witnesses. An interesting feature appears at the point of lack of evidence or witnessing. A vestige of an image is endowed with the truth of a veritable memory. They both had seen and had known and had kept silent. Neither Creusa nor the old man would let each other down at this point. The possibility of having shared a secret is upgraded to a certainty. It is a credit to both. To Creusa for having evaded the inquisitive eye of society, to the servant for being the sole and silent witness of such a masterful deception.

A new myth replaces the old one. The past is redefined in order to fit the requirements of the present. A general assault on time, a fragmentation, takes place: backdating one's certainties, distorting the opponent's place in time, nullifying the good struggle of virtue and silence, regressing further and further back are what it takes for Creusa and the old man to legitimise their frustration and their anger. Beneath all lurks the same motive, the impossibility of desire in whatever disguise.

What does the present require? "τὸν πρῶτον ἠδίκησαντὰ σ' ἄπο τινὸν θεόν" the servant suggests. Creusa retreats from the awesome impossibility of the task: "καὶ πῶς τὰ κρείσσω θνητὸς οὐσ' ὑπερδράμω;" [Avenge the god who wronged you first / How, I, mortal triumph over the strong?] (l. 971-2) [trans. Way 1958]. Just like Xuthus and

Ion who are told to leave the oracle together but do not know how and retreat to their past to find their bearings, the daughter and the father will seek theirs in the very same space. The slight moderation of their revenge basically preserves the truth of the oracle, the same one the servant had postulated in the beginning when he had declared that Apollo was not involved and that it was all Xuthus' fault (l. 825).

Looking back they discover a 'black patch', a stretch of meaningless time they must account for. Creusa and the old man ought to have seized the opportunity to *interpret* it in a symbolic way¹⁰⁴. That would have put Creusa's long self-appointed struggle in perspective. It would have taken into account the responsibility for the house of Erechtheus and who bears it, it would have dealt with the present trouble and the husbands in the context of law governed relations, it would have meant that the present pair would take the Other into account. There the race with Xuthus would have been won. Unfortunately, only an 'imaginary' extension of the plot allows us to think what would have happened if Creusa and the old man had not been fascinated by the secrecy of the other and had shouted 'foul' in the first instance.

They fall victim to the expected and the anticipated reward of their good service and struggle which they think goes to their rivals instead. What seems to bother Creusa more than her husband's infidelity is the fact that she does not receive what is due to her from Apollo- irrespective of the fact that it would also upset the established order. With the intervention of the slave, the mirror of her fears, Creusa sees *nothing* in the place of her noble cause and *nothing* in the place of her future. She *has* no past and no future. She is at the same spot as Ion was in the previous scene just after he learned that he had to leave the oracle and follow that man into a hostile city. In a similar way Creusa is left with the *form* of the agon, the manner and the style of her silence, *an empty form* now that its essence had been subtracted. There she is asked to invest it with new meaning and she will just do that. The presence of the other, the fellow human being, the benevolent father, is more than enough to guarantee that she will fall into the same old trap as anyone else in her place.

It is no surprise, then, that Creusa regresses to a less familiar past, an older myth of the family. And indeed, like Ion, she does that when the other appears to give up:

¹⁰⁴ The similarities with the pair Xuthus-Ion are obvious. All four of them prefer to use the moment to inflate their ego in a narcissistic way rather than admit their ignorance and take it from there.

Cre: "ἐπισημον ὁ φόνος, καὶ τὸ δοῦλον ἀσθενές" [No, too open, and-with slaves- too uncertain];

Serv: "ὦμοι, κακίζῃ φέρε, σὺ νῦν βούλευέ τι" [If you are afraid, I give it up. Think of something yourself];

Cre: "καὶ μὴν ἔχω γε δόλια καὶ δραστήρια" [I have a way - secret and certain] (l. 983-5).

The weapon that will kill Ion is older than all generations. It is a mythical asset. It goes back to the separation of good from evil, to the first dyad. Creusa will use it in a mechanistic way, clearly missing its symbolic significance. It is remarkable how blind she is to the meaning of the story she herself tells, to the myth that wants good and bad tied together as she just recites its content in her defence. Yet the twin drops of blood are nothing but the signifier/symbol of the order of the world and the succession of kings from the time the monsters were subdued onwards. Under the pressure of the circumstances the amulet will become a poison and the object of her support, the slave, will become the instrument of her revenge. The child will have affected its surroundings in a perfectly narcissistic omnipotent way.

Likewise, the further they retreat from the cause of their aggression, the frustration of the past, the more the other becomes responsible for their misery. Ion's death is hailed as salvation and panacea and anticipated with excitement:

"προλάζυμαι γοῦν τῷ χρόνῳ τῆς ἡδονῆς" (l. 1027) says Creusa when everything is close to falling into place. Everything will be as before, the impostor will be out of the way, the husband will know nothing - "καὶ σὸν λήσεις πόσιν ἅ σε σπεύδει λαθεῖν" (l. 1028) and Creusa will nowhere appear involved in this. The danger, remnant of the bad object, is expelled and in its place emerges the gratitude of the city to its liberator, the ideal-in-the future that seems to support the general mood of debt and indebtedness.

In their jubilation at the approaching success Creusa and the old servant miss the simple fact that while their anger is secretly well founded their success will be exposed to the eyes of the entire world. Indeed their only chance is to fail. The symmetry of the narcissistic structures guarantees that. "The child who strikes another says that he has been struck; the child who sees another fall, cries" says Lacan [Lacan 1948, p. 19]. So they think they are safe if Creusa who has a motive stays obscure, away from the scene and the servant, with no apparent motive, executes her command.

The last impressions are the strongest. The last action determines the issue of all the previous ones. Creusa and the old servant will appear stupid because of that.

In this part I have discussed the building of the symmetrical narcissistic universe of the chorus, the servant and Creusa. The chorus proposes a way of dealing with the trouble that amounts almost to aggression against themselves. The servant redirects it against the external world. As a tribute to both their desires I have tried to picture the alienation of an absolutely imaginary identification with the other as the basis of their mindless and perhaps murderous desire. In the final part, which I also consider as the introduction to Creusa's monologue, I have tried to follow the ingredients of the imaginary in a way parallel to the previous scene. Like her husband, Creusa regresses into her mythical past in order to find support for her claims. Like him, she invests objects of the external world with love and hatred.

Concluding Remarks

In the beginning of this part I described Scenes Two and Three as arrangements of mirrors. Apollo's oracle hands down an obscure message, a child. The message passes from mouth to mouth. The mirage of the child passes in front of the eyes of each receiver, upsets the order of the world, threatens to spread disaster and chaos. Everyone loves 'the child' but no one is prepared to take responsibility for it. Its presence must be concealed. Its fate must be determined in secret (*λάθρα*) and must remain a secret, for an indefinite time. A superficial indifference must be maintained. Appearances must not be disturbed.

In the meantime it, too, works *λάθρα*. Under the unruffled exterior of their childless sorrow Xuthus and Creusa are preparing the ground for its reception. The child does not make families, it destroys them. It unearths the prejudice, the secrets, the hatred, the xenophobia, the mistrust and all the misgivings repressed by the pact of Xuthus' marriage to Creusa and Athens' gratitude to their saviour. It cancels the past layer by layer. First, Xuthus' commitment to his wife and vice versa, then Apollo's involvement, then the authority of the one who orders, witnesses and sanctions the whole affair - be it Apollo or another father-figure.

Xuthus does not need to go far in order to sanction the child. He nominates his son and this should be enough in the symbolic. But when he leaves the position of the symbolic father and becomes *personally involved* in it the troubles begin. What Creusa's side sees in this is primarily the violation of law and order. Thus they start from the wish to restore it. But they too become *personally involved* and instead of restoring law and order they almost end up destroying it completely. Thus the mistrust of the two sides has its roots in the symbolic where the terms 'husband', 'wife', 'daughter', 'son', 'law' etc. have meaning. Within the same order the threat to their status and their hopes for re-institution also have meaning. Even when Creusa and her friends pledge to take the law into their hands and punish the usurper they have to refer to the law and their position in society.

A silent war begins. It does not matter who started it, it is always the other. Xuthus and Creusa will never notice their similarity, how much like each other they are and how little each cares for the other. They do indeed share a lot, but not as symbolic husband and wife. For as long as the imaginary game lasts, an equilibrium is maintained- till the moment when one of the parties makes a mistake and exposes itself to the justified wrath of the other. Neither is better than the other; they are all equal. This equality is maintained in the face of the 'absolute master', death.

Death is encountered in its imaginary form. Although it is not difficult to trace its origins in the symbolic fear of castration or symbolic exile from society, it appears here as an imminent direct attack on the subject's life. It is a very 'rational' fear, since it is constructed according to the principles of very simple- imaginary- logic: *I am complete, the other envies my completeness, the other envies me and wants my death.* But one can only anticipate what one envies in the others.

Where does it all begin? In our play each scene is a new beginning that always obeys the universal law of language: in the beginning it was the word ... and it is always the word of the father. Apollo delivers his word and it reaches down to everyone. By the same token 'the new beginning' is made necessary by the structure of the play itself. The child passes from hand to hand and is in a way shared by everyone. It is obscure, a phallus behind the curtains, 'it', the complement one has or has not, contemplates, reaches out for and gains or loses. The idea of the *new beginnings* of the play is suggested by the play itself. Lacan warns analysts to wait for the completion of speech, to defer their judgement till the last letter has fallen into place. We are a long

way from that, but, taking into account the expression of desire, the continuous reversals of fortune and the high stakes raised in Scene One, we can only say that the most permanent feature of the desire of the play seeks to cancel all its false starts and start from the beginning again.

Lacan reminds us that a new beginning is only ever possible in the symbolic. Scenes Two and Three start off from the symbolic, death and society, travel via the imaginary, and by the end of the circle, when the time of another new beginning is right and all passion is spent, the scene is set for the cliché: the first day of the rest of their life.

In this circle, excluding the influence of the future we know as spectators, we prepare for the future we do not know by relying on the past we want to forget. More than anything else the most lingering impression from Scenes Two and Three is, for me, the desire to live mysteriously attracted to the desire of death and a compelling desire to maintain desire at any cost. Of all the clichés of psychoanalysis none rings truer than Freud's famous dictum that the subject is quite reluctant to forgo the narcissistic pleasures of the past. We see it in every moment, dispassionate and non-involved as we are. Ion states that he would prefer the calmness of the oracular shrine, Creusa wants to return to the sadness of childlessness rather than accept someone else's child, and Xuthus and the old man, who seem to have a span of memory longer than anyone else, want to return to the blissful folly of youth. Taken just one step back, it seems that desire is always narcissistically defined and takes its measure from the previously occupied position. Carried to extremes, desire is narcissistically defined by the regression to the furthest of pasts and to the darkest of memories, always tending towards the blissful ignorance of childhood or Freud's suggestion that the purpose of life is death, but death reached in the organism's own time¹⁰⁵. In our case the complication would be the foreign body, the ally, the rape, the illegitimate child that disturb the bliss of the oracular shrine and the peaceful decline of the line of Athenian kings. This, however, does not seem to be the case. The play of 'life' flirts with death in a different way. It follows the consequences of 'entering' meaning via the necessary repression of non-meaning- and discovering in the other the secret of what has been denied. Scenes Two and Three are preceded by the disaster in Scene One. They are

¹⁰⁵ In 'Beyond the pleasure principle' Freud [1920, p. 313] observes that life leads to death by following its own course.

shadowed by the ghost of "the child" which as *pure signifier* can be made to look like both life and death and like a mirror give body to the moods, the thoughts and the emotions of the one standing opposite to it. Isn't everyone becoming a child in its presence? What is this ghost that passes from hand to hand and really 'makes them all forget their differences', amicably or non-amicably and fall in and out of love with the other? It is simply a child in which the adult's narcissism is restored and because it can excite everybody's feelings for its likeness to everybody it is scary as well.

I have maintained throughout this analysis that everybody has an impossible desire. In Scene One the outcome of the brief 'negotiation of meaning' between two strangers is that they stumbled on the impossibility itself. In that scene Creusa and Ion go through the same identification of solidarity and are led on by the same lure of the imaginary narcissism for a brief stretch of time. They fall into the usual traps of the expected and the familiar image, the other's tears, the noble origin, the namelessness of the child, the seduction of the half-concealed answers that fire the imagination and allow the other to see himself implicated in 'your' desire. But the magnitude of their ignorance and the devastating directness of their demand is such as to make any progress impossible. Who would fall for 'just die for me' coming from a stranger or 'forget your desire, do as I say' coming from a slave? So, upon breaking up their short-lived solidarity in Scene One, they return to the safety of the previous position, the assumption of strangeness and protective silence, their little narcissistic reserve that conceals the 'trauma' of the unexpected news.

The new beginning is another 'trauma', a mixed blessing even for the fortunate. Ion puts it nicely: 'Where did this new *συμφορὰ* (hap) come from?' he wonders. The new meaning supersedes the old one. A new order is placed on top of the unresolved previous one. Scenes Two and Three evoke Scene One, differ from it, and in the end arrive at the same point. Certainly go *beyond* Scene One in their span-of-time, but they reach the same unsettled questions of life and death when they come full circle, when Creusa and Ion meet again at point zero. The failure of all participants to reach the beginnings of discourse, their *aporia*, is the kind of progress we are talking about. Two ways of *seeing* are now established. According to the first, wherever you look you see nothing, the emptiness of the missing child, the suspension of your desire, the total *aporia* and nothingness you are coextensive with. According to the second, you are someone, and if you are lucky you are everything. You know more than you

thought and there is someone else to help you and complement your knowledge and your life, and, most importantly, to see in you what you cannot see in yourself. Neither of the two orders is ever destroyed.

I would call Scenes Two and Three 'an apprenticeship in the imaginary' or an 'apprenticeship in appearances'. The least one learns - if there is anything to learn - is that the apparent rightness of one's cause does not guarantee the rightness of one's position, does not justify one's means and at the end of the day, one has to resort to the same 'sordid' little deceptions as the other who is certainly worse than oneself. But this lesson in humanity or in the scariness of meeting one's double comes only later. The ground is being laid for it. For the moment, however, this is not obvious. The Imaginary scares away the ghosts of nothingness by offering a trick and illusion, the lure of completeness and unity in the form of the other. The gift of love offered so amply and so generously at the right moment- such a good timing should make it suspect- is accepted with gratitude. 'You are nothing' is reversed into 'you are everything to me' and to 'I abandon myself to you' or 'I would die for you', which answers the need of the previous time. Coming from the shock of death Creusa and Ion are easily hooked.

For the first time the presence of the other 'lends its clothes' to the 'naked' desire of the un-loved child. The offer of paternity is an offer of unconditional love, which answers the eternal demand for love with the display of infinite affection 'I care for you, I would die for you, I would do anything for you'. But love is to be returned, not to be just recognised like desire¹⁰⁶.

With the offer of love the world splits into two symmetrical parts: us and them, the narcissistic symmetry of the imaginary world. We have seen how it works and how it perpetuates its forms in the other and via the other by *projecting* its shortcomings and *injecting* its own goodness. By developing hate as the opposite of love.

With the offer of love the world of concrete things is born, the order of the *obvious* and the *transparent* in which the senses acquire their certainty, thought thrives, and, in general, body and mind work in harmony to restore not just a previous condition but the blissful mindless happiness of another time. The would-be child is shown what is

¹⁰⁶ Desire is recognised [Lacan:Miller 1975] means it is expressed and mediated in/by language, in the Symbolic. It does not mean 'it is satisfied'. Satisfaction mainly falls within the Imaginary.

in store for him/her in the glory of Athens, without being warned of the possibility of failure.

With the offer of love the order of *appearances* and *deception* is born. The implication of the symmetries that govern everything from the reversal of fortune of Scene One to planning the elimination of the other the general input of the apprenticeship is that everything has another side. But to the characters, who are in-side, this is no easy thing to see. It is, however, manifested in its basic form, when one pretends not to be what one thinks one is. I would therefore say that under the caring gaze of the fellow human being a first glimpse into being and representing is achieved in which the subject begins to play with forms and desire(s) without destroying them completely. Even under the absolute stress of 'death' that dictates unholy alliances this is, in my opinion, the first effect of humanisation of desire- where previously there was only the suspension and the speechlessness of total *aporia*.

I have constructed the interplay of desires in Scenes Two and Three with the following two basic principles in mind. First, that desire is essentially unsatisfiable and second, that satisfaction is never complete and total, it is never an elimination of desire. This fact is the simple support of the success of appearances, of the reliance on the other, of the reawakening of narcissism and of being able to see oneself in the future where one saw nothing before.

I have also tried to show that despite the solidarity of common causes cemented on the need for some satisfaction (imaginary) and some recognition (symbolic) the opposite is also grounded here, the basic aggression that threatens to destroy the edifice of good will and comradeship from inside, from the side from which trouble is not expected. If Xuthus and Ion and Creusa and her friends can get prepared for the enemy attack and duplicate the other's movements in a carbon-copy fashion they miss the obvious in a big way. They miss the obvious return of the repressed, their own aggression at the point where a friend kindly orders: *abandon your (previous) desire, bear my desire, do as I say* supplemented with *because I know what is best for you*.

In the multi-layered combination of mirrors the truth of the matter is that each and every one is on his own. Eternal gratitude is due to the other, the fellow human being for supplying the vital images for the subject and for supporting the ego when it was almost breaking up, for allaying the fear of death or the fear of castration by

(re)presenting a powerful but relatively manageable father; but gratitude stops precisely there. The *father on my side* still remains the object of ambivalence and gives rise to mixed feelings. Enchanted by playing the father, Xuthus and old man unwittingly replicate ways too familiar to Ion and Creusa. Their crashing indifference for the mother or for the effects of their acts are reminiscent of the indifference of another father. Xuthus' uncontrollable sexuality and youthful folly will never stop echoing the indifference of another father. The old man's blind eyes will not stop echoing another father's blindness or deafness to paternal feeling. Under love and care lies the suspicion of another unfortunate woman who, though she might have entered into the Bacchic mysteries in full consciousness, took leave of her senses.

The crashing indifference of the ignorant fathers goes against the grain of Ion and Creusa's desire- and more importantly against the grain of their neurotic desire which for the moment takes the form of the missing mother and the (dead) child and ultimately, of not been able to satisfy their curiosity and their knowledge in a definitive way- by making Apollo speak.

Xuthus and the old man inadvertently order '*Be a man*' / '*Be a woman*' and throw into turmoil their innocent 'children' who have repressed any knowledge of sexuality. Still, there is always a certain degree of fascination in the father who is ready to give his life for/to his child. Creusa and Ion have refused to die for each other in the previous scene but when they see such a spontaneous display of endless love, of love to the death they are bound to be moved by the mark of excellence represented even by such mindless devotion. There, I believe, the offer of death from the other hits the most sensitive area of impotence in the neurotic desire of the future mother and the son who could never match such excellence. This inimitable trend in the other, paired with conflicting advice and verbal demands, will promote the response that will finally brings Creusa and Ion face to face again.

CHAPTER 3

ION'S DESIRE

If Scenes Two and Three are full of passion and potential, Creusa and Ion's second meeting is an explosion of meaning. It starts an avalanche of changes, a series of intense short episodes which succeed one another with dramatic rapidity. Suspense, agony, drama is the effect of that rapidity.

These episodes are full of meaning on their own but when they are considered together, like a string of letters forming a word, they spell a more profound message. With the second meeting and the collapse of communication between Creusa and Ion a problem is created: how to survive, how not to die. When death is 'postponed' by the Pythia the problem begins to take its final form: how to live- meaningfully.

The chapter is entitled "Ion's desire". It is written with Ion's essential aporias in mind and it ends with the discussion of the meaning of Athena's intervention. The basic argument concerning Athena's intervention is that she answers a very precise demand and it is only by doing that, that she creates the circumstances necessary for life to take a normal course. Creusa's desire and the discussion concerning the happiness of the mother-son pair are completed in the next chapter.

The present chapter does not require a theoretical part as the previous two did, and we must assume our entire knowledge of the Imaginary and the Symbolic at this point. The approach, however, to the *here and now* of the scenes has been influenced by the final stages of analysis as discussed by Lacan in the Seminar on Freud's technique. I must therefore introduce the relevant notions very briefly. Another reference to theory (towards the end of the chapter), to the function of procreation and the notion of 'being a father' in the economy of desire, is based on earlier discussions of the Oedipus complex and mainly expand on familiar notions.

Analysis relies on the notion of *intersubjectivity*: "Everything begins with the possibility of naming, which is both destructive of the thing and allows the passage of

the thing onto the symbolic plane, thanks to which the truly human register comes into its own. It is from that point on that, in a more and more complicated manner, the embodiment of the symbolic within the imaginary experience takes place. The symbolic will shape those inflections which, in the life of the adult, the imaginary commitment, the original *captation*, can take on" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 219]. *Intersubjectivity* summarises the essential requirements for human relations. By 'destructive of the thing' Lacan means the breaking of the imaginary duality (between the ego and its object) by the introduction of the symbolic mediation of language. The characteristic example of the 'destruction of the thing' and the representation of both the sacrifice and the law that causes it is the famous 'Fort/da' case¹⁰⁷. Intersubjectivity also implies *recognition* [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 216], another key notion in psychoanalysis: referring to desire, recognition means *acknowledgement* of desire, of having a desire, rather than satisfaction of it.

¹⁰⁷Freud [1920, pp. 284-6] observes his grandson playing-acting the departure of his mother by throwing away and retrieving a cotton ball attached to a string. At the same time he pronounces two distinct sounds o/a (which later Freud deciphers: fort/ da: here/there). Freud assumes that the child was reproducing the painful experience of separation and by doing so he was mastering it. Lacan lays emphasis on the introduction of language at that very point, on the *verbal* representation of the experience. The linguistic representation causes/is the *death of the thing*.

The following quotation-comment from Lacan [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 174] summarises the essentials of access to language: "it is in fact already in his solitude that the desire of the little man has become the desire of the other, of an alter ego, who dominates him and whose object of desire is henceforth his own affliction ... but don't forget that, when he says Fort, it is because the object is here, and when he says Da the object is absent- and since his call has the effect of making him slip away, he will search in a banishing affirmation ... the provocation of the return which brings his object back to this desire. So you see here that- already before the introduction of the no, of the refusal of the other, when the subject learns to constitute ... the negativation of the simple call, the appearance of a simple pair of symbols when confronted with the contrasted phenomenon of presence and absence, that is to say the introduction of the symbol, reverses the positions. Absence is evoked in presence, and presence in absence ... it is in so far as the symbol allows this inversion, that is to say cancels the existing thing, that it opens up the world of negativity, which constitutes both the discourse of the human subject and the reality of his world in so far as it is human. Primal masochism should be located around this initial negativation, around this original murder of the thing".

Coming to analysis, the subject commits himself to the discovery of a truth, to be looked for initially in his symptoms. He also commits himself to a symbolic relation and to an *ignorance* as to the meaning of his symptoms and to a gradual 'unearthing' of knowledge concerning them. The success of analysis depends on the acceptance of intermediate findings/truths and finally on the full symbolic integration of what has been found. Thus the analysand revises his personal *history* in order to elucidate its 'grey areas'. The term history is important. It does concern fact but mostly it concerns interpretation. History starts from the past but continues into the future. Analysis aims at clarifying the particular meaning of the subject's discourse as a historical discourse unfolding in the present: "the subject's centre of gravity is this present synthesis of the past which we call *history*" Lacan says [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 36], meaning that it is because the subject has a future and because this future must be meaningful that he seeks to unravel the entangled threads of the past in the present time of analysis.

Lacan reminds us that the repressed and meaningless part of the subject's history is "covered by a blank or falsehood", it is, in other words, misrecognised and misinterpreted by the subject itself. Recognising its significance, reorganising and interpreting its meaning, accepting it in one's own history- with the clarity of a historical fact perhaps- is what matters most. Analysis proceeds first by dealing with the ego's identifications, peeling off its layers: "Once the number of cycles necessary for the subject's objects to appear have been accomplished...all is not, for all that, brought to term. What was initially there, in O, then here, in O', then again in O, has to be referred to the completed system of symbols. The very outcome of analysis requires it" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 199]. At the point when all objects have been dealt with and all mirages have been set aside, the subject must take the next step: "Every analyst, in fact, is a witness to the fact that no resolution of an analysis is possible, whatever the diversity, the iridescence of the archaic events that it brings into play, if it does not end by knotting itself around this legal, legalising co-ordinate, which is called the Oedipus complex" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 198]. It is one of Lacan's most stable positions that symbolic integration must pass via (a representation of) the Oedipus complex. This is because the Oedipus complex is one of the most dominant expressions of the subject's relation to the law in Western societies. At the end of analysis, the complex represents the general cultural referent to which the value and

effectiveness of the analytic experience will 'return'. The final reference to the symbolic myth represents a form of acknowledgement of the 'success' of analysis as a whole. Indeed Lacan uses the term 'myth' and refers to 'mythologies' as anchors or 'patterns' of behaviour in the past of humanity [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 200].

The interest in the Oedipus complex at the final stages of analysis is also closely related to the direction of the inquiries towards 'the absurdity of the super-ego'. Law and super-ego are tied together: "The super-ego is an imperative.. it is consonant with the register and the idea of the law, that is to say with the totality of the system of language, in so far as it defines the situation of man as such, that is to saying so far as he is not just a biological individual". The problems, then, dealt with in analysis, converge on its "senseless, blind character, of pure imperativeness and simple tyranny" is so far as "the super-ego has a relation to the law, and it is at the same time a senseless law, going so far as to become a failure to recognise [*méconnaissance*] the law. That is always the way we see the super-ego in the neurotic... [it] is at once the law and its destruction. *As such it is speech itself*, the commandment of the law, in so far as nothing more than its root remains. The law is entirely reduced to something, which cannot even be expressed, like the *You must*, which is speech deprived of all its meaning. *It is in this sense that the super-ego ends up by being identified with only what is most devastating, most fascinating, in the primitive experiences of the subject.* It ends up being identified with what I call *the ferocious figure*, with the figures which we can link to primitive traumas the child has suffered, whatever they are" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 102, emphasis added].

What gives access to the truth of the subject, to the misunderstanding of the past and the entanglement of the absurd super-ego? "Truth emerges from the mistake" Lacan says. He explains: "Error shows itself to be such whenever, at a given moment, it ends in a *contradiction*. If I started by saying that roses are plants which generally live under water, and if it seems from what follows that for the whole day I remained in the same place as the roses, since it is also quite clear that I cannot remain for a day under water, a contradiction appears in my discourse, demonstrating my error. In other

words, in discourse, it is *contradiction* which sorts truth from error"¹⁰⁸ [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 264]. And because the error is not only the slip of the tongue or the 'witz' (joke), analysis proceeds by creating the circumstances under which the error, the contradiction, will appear. "...we make strenuous efforts, when things aren't going well, to exact some words from him [subject] which will tie him down. Lord knows how adult's dialectic skids! The point is to link the subject to his contradictions, to make him sign what he says, and to pledge his speech in a dialectic" Lacan says [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 230].

For the end of psychoanalysis, for the 'exit' from it, Lacan refers to nothing else but the subject's relation to language. At the end of the second Seminar [Lacan:Miller 1978, p. 286] language is defined by its *historical continuity* and to a certain extent by an abstract purity, while the subject's participation in it is defined by *meaning*, what introduces him in the temporal succession and, at the end of the day, his own private and particular 'meaningful' interpretations of 'the language' (ibid). The experience of psychoanalysis, as transitional experience, is to be found in this wider perspective: "Each subject" notes Lacan "doesn't simply have to take cognisance of the world, as if

¹⁰⁸ For the relation of truth to error Lacan asks: *Where does truth emerge?* "In life, you can see truth catch error from behind" says Lacan [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 264]. "In analysis, truth emerges in the most clear-cut representative of the mistake- the slip, the action which one, improperly, calls *manqué* [missed, failed, abortive]". More specifically "Within what we call free associations, dream images, symptoms, a word bearing the truth is revealed" (ibid). In dreams the significance of the word is revealed not in a single meaning but in a network of meanings. In analysis these dimensions are reopened: "[the subject] tells us this speech not only verbally, but through all his other means of expression. Even through his body, the subject emits a speech, which is, as such, speech of truth, a signifying speech which he does not even know he emits. It is because he always says more than he means to, always more than he thinks he says" (p. 266).

We should also remember, at this point, the ignorance of the subject in analysis and the appeal to the analysts or whoever he looks up to to offer him the key to his desire. Psychoanalysis seeks that key in the unconscious. There appears a significant analytic principle: "What Freud means when he talks about the suspension of the principle of non-contradiction in the unconscious is that the genuine speech that we are supposed to uncover, in the dream, in the slip, in the Witz, obeys laws other than those of discourse, which is subject to the condition of having to move within error up to the moment when it encounters contradiction. Authentic speech has other modes, other means, than everyday speech" (p. 267).

it all happened on the level of noetics, *he has to find his way about in it*. If psychoanalysis means anything, it is that he is already engaged in something which has a relation with language without being identical to it, and that he has to find his way about in it- the universal discourse" [Lacan:Miller 1978, p. 283]. One of the most quoted phrases of psychoanalysis defines the relation of the subject to discourse: "he [the subject] is the chorus line of this discourse, he himself is, if you prefer, a message. *A message has been written on his head*, and he is entirely located in the succession of messages. Each of his choices is a speech" (ibid).

A word on the role of the analyst must be added here. The analyst does not give ready made answers and does not interfere except when the analysand 'is almost there', when he is about to reach and recognise the meaning in what he has been saying. Any other intervention by the analyst will be received either as an encouragement of certain imaginary attachments or a reprimand from the super-ego. Ideally, the analyst, whom Lacan expects to be pass master in the function of speech and alert to its nuances, will stir the subject towards the multiple meanings of his speech that arise in the difference between *veut-dire* and *vouloir-dire* (what he *wants to* and *would like to* say). [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 242].

I would like to close this short theoretical note with two quotations from the Seminar on Freud. The first one concerns the poetry of language and applies, I believe, to all language and to all uses. It concerns the *creative* function of the (linguistic) symbol: "Were I to address another being, whether created or not, in calling him *sun of my heart*, it would be an error to believe... that it is a question of a comparison, between what you are in my heart and what the sun is...Simply from my having formulated this relation, it is me, my avowal, my invocation, which enters the domain of the symbol. Implied in this formula is the fact that the sun heats me up, the fact that it allows me to live, and also that it is the centre of my gravitation... that it also blinds me, lending false clarity and the deceptive glitter to everything" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 238].

The second quotation concern the 'responsibility' of the subject, of the speaking human being. This, too, goes beyond psychoanalysis. It is supported by the difference of the Imaginary and the Symbolic in its fullest sense, by what differentiates the Symbolic as such from a formidably organised Imaginary that looks like it: "That is

what we have to explore in a rigorous fashion if we want to make any progress at all in thinking about what we are doing. Of course, we don't *have* to do so. I will even admit that the majority of human beings quite universally excuse themselves from so doing, and accomplish what they have to in no less satisfactory fashion. I would go even further - one can push discourse, and even dialectic, extremely far, while avoiding thought entirely. Nonetheless, every step forward in the symbolic world capable of constituting a revelation implies, at least a brief moment, an effort of thought. Now, an analysis is nothing other than an entire series of revelations particular to each subject. So it is probable that his activity requires the alert as to the meaning of what he is doing, and that, from time to time, he devote a moment of thought" [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 267].

In our play we have no analysts and no analysands. But we have two interventions 'from above' in Creusa and Ion's quarrel. We have truths and revelations and the poetic play of language at its best. We also have two subjects who would like to live happily beyond the confines of the shrine. We also have paternal figures of some considerable strictness and a proneness to death. We will be looking for meaning and meaningfulness in their discourse.

In this chapter we focus on a number of turning points: a) Creusa and Ion's second meeting; b) Pythia's intervention; c) Ion's hesitation about opening the box; d) the recognition of mother and son; e) the unveiling of the secret of paternity and Athena's last intervention. The reading relies on the effect of the succession of these moments as much as on the impact of each one on its own.

The final part of the play contains some fascinating moments which both attract our attention and tend to 'monopolise' an interpretation if considered in isolation. For instance, here is the happy ending. I am not the first to point out its 'soap opera' effect. I am not the first to be left with mixed feelings in the end. There is the fascinating second encounter between Creusa and Ion ridden with stillness; there is the Pythia's intervention which at first appears absolutely arbitrary and 'divine'. Emphasising any of these terms disproportionately to the others creates different readings. Attributing equal significance to all allows meaning to emerge from all.

With the second meeting the divine powers become more prominent. A subjection of 'the mortals' to higher powers appears to alternate with mortals' strong desire to upset or even destroy the order of the world. The reintroduction of Apollo's message through the Pythia, amounts to a new beginning which reverses the course of the play and makes the second half look like a mirror image of the first¹⁰⁹. We will try to show that mortals' desires rather than divine providence direct the progress of the play.

More reasons for reinforcing the 'human' point of view: emotion reaches its peak in a confrontational threat, not a tragic death, and so never loses its reversibility, and from then on it is being redirected to happier causes like *a malleable mass of unspecified feeling* ready to take any shape. There also appears to be a gratuitous extension-to-the-limits of some formalisms, reversals and recognitions and copying of positions which reminds us of the eternal play of mirrors, the endless mirrorings we learned to recognise as essentially, narcissistically, catastrophic. The same mechanisms that create disaster now seem to allow happiness to materialise, together with the doubt that subverts it: how is one supposed to believe one's eyes, one's senses, one's mind, and above all the other, when all that is said and done is swept away as 'error'. There comes a god that cuts short the perpetuation of doubt, distributes valedictions together with some clues about how to discern between 'always' and 'forever'- but what makes this intervention meaningful? Or is it not meaningful? Or are mortals just impressionable?

In the following reading I try to represent the passage from a hopeless situation to a hopeful one. I try to represent 'the air' of consent and good faith. I am guided by the happy ending to the extent that it is the last lasting impression, but I merge it with the spirit of the play and the requirements of psychoanalysis that claim 'success' by means of a successful re-integration into society. It is not the happy ending as such that matters but the achievement of an *affirmation*, a general accession to the symbolic through the necessary sacrifices.

¹⁰⁹ In the 'first part' we had Hermes' opening, then the father's recognition and the mother's hatred. In the 'second', we have hatred, recognition and Athena's closing. This symmetry is bound to catch our attention and affect our interpretation, but there comes the 'moral lesson' of the danger of fascinations right from the previous part.

We will focus on Ion's desire because he is the child that keeps the family together. I consider the course of the play from the second meeting of Creusa and Ion onwards as a complete version of the oedipal drama that ends with the assumption of a (paternal) signifier by Ion. I believe that 'the second part' of the play clearly shows the difference between a symbolic arrangement and any other solution. It illustrates the flow of signification, the value of an encounter with the absurdity of the superego, the fact that meaning is never exactly where one thinks it is. Ultimately, I am guided by the poetry of language, the laws of metonymy and metaphor that must necessarily appear and be made to work. In our case it takes two well-timed interventions before Ion can make the first steps 'out in the world'.

The Altar Scene : Specular Duality

Death spills over from the previous scenes at the second encounter between Ion and Creusa and updates the unresolved issues of the first meeting. Saturated with love, scared to death, Ion and Creusa will take it upon themselves, as in the first time round, to defend the indefensible order of the other's desire, while yet unable to see how it relates to theirs. Mirror positions are maintained, a perfect balance of words and appearances, a deadly symmetry finely illustrated by their exchange of positions¹¹⁰.

The following account consists of three parts. First, a demonstration of how the exchange of words deteriorates into a dead end of silence, second, an examination of the consequences of the clash on the past relations (paternal, friends, and what they represent), third, an evaluation of the clash in relation to the immediate future of the play.

The limits of the verbal duel are set with reference to the Law, which is hastily invoked by both of them: one has the right to defend one's rightful position. Take it

¹¹⁰ The exchange of positions reverberates with possible meanings. Is it a chance event? It is possible. Do they owe their salvation to an accident (of haste) then? To resort to the altar as suppliant implies being able and eager to use the symbolic option that is available. Structural necessity makes this entrapment at the altar the only possible way forward.

any further and things stop being self-explanatory. Beyond the appropriation of 'the right to protect' and the simplistic projection of 'the wrong' onto the rival, the simultaneous reference by both Ion and Creusa to the very same ideals only throws them into deeper confusion. Both look up to an order they think exclusive to themselves until the real dimension of the problem emerges in language. Having exchanged places, the two rivals rehearse all the available arguments of self righteousness. They are specular images, man/ woman, master/ servant, now/ then, doubles of the same paternity, the same descent and the same despair, the same corporeal inviolability protected by the law of the oracle and the city. All arguments are thrown in and all are counterbalanced. The verbal duel deteriorates into an inevitable silence when they reach the point of absolute likeness (similarity to each other).

There are arguments of *belonging* and *time*: "I here dedicate my body to him" (l. 1285) "You belong to your father" (l. 1287), "you were Apollo's but ceased to belong to him" (l. 1289).

Arguments of *guilt* and *enmity*: "You are guilty, I was innocent / I guilty? You are an enemy of my house" (l. 1290-1).

Arguments of *literal and metaphorical meaning*: "I never took arms against Athens / you were setting Erechtheus' palace on fire" (l. 1292-3) .

Arguments of *paternal heritage and authority*: "my father has a right to give me what he won / what right had the son of Aeolus in Athens?" (l. 1296-7) or "surely I had some right there as a son / Your right there is - his sword ... no more" (l. 1304-5).

Arguments of *future misfortune, hasty anticipation and fear and envy*: "why kill me for fear of my hopes? / to save my own life I had to strike first / because you are childless you grudge me to my father/you envied me / Because I am childless must you snatch my home from me?" (l. 1300-3).

Lines of *linguistic skill and sneering reproach*: "he saved Athens; and by arms, not arguments", "...does that make him a citizen?" (l. 1298-9).

We can imagine this fatal exchange going on for ever - or as long as they can rely on the rights they are defending and on keeping still, frozen, where they are. Thus they are bound to mirror positions, to the same consequences of the same acts and to the same father. Nothing differentiates them, as they lose the exclusive right of an appeal

to Apollo, the guarantor of the rightness of their cause. Ion and Creusa have managed to reach the dead end of narcissism. Everything starts from here.

As the variety of father-inspired arguments begins to lose its meaning by repetition, Ion and Creusa begin to rely on their physical presence more and more. They are inter-locked into a (living) representation of death which paradoxically preserves the body and makes it the strongest argument. The symbolic meaning of the stillness and of putting one's body on the line to save what one stands for, makes a difficult point. It obscures one similarity and brings forth another. It obscures the (re)semblance of their aggression but exposes the devastating truth of the issue at hand: you might have to lose your life in order to defend your rights. You might need to die for your ideals, or at any rate, you might gain them only by losing everything else¹¹¹.

The order of the world, however, will not be disturbed by Ion or Creusa's death. It seems to leave them out and consider them dead anyway. It is only to them, to their narcissism, that death and annihilation matters.

In the middle of that inconceivable stalemate a narcissistic 'solution'- do for me what I cannot do for myself- is proposed by Ion. It is a verbal demand, which literally squeezes the last drops of speech out of the situation. It is so naive and so honest and so true that it does not really matter whether it is spoken in anger or in frustration, as a plea or as a threat:

"ἐκλείπε βωμὸν καὶ θεηλάτους ἐδρας" [get up, leave the holy altar] (l. 1307)

But the request is not satisfied. Instead it is answered by the apparent aimless masochistic 'turning upon oneself' with which Creusa refuses it and demolishes the distance between gods and mortals:

¹¹¹ The subject is confronted by a menacing loss: *your ideals or your life*; usually, one 'gains' one's ideals by dying- which is no good for living and for having resorted to the altar in order to live. The radical 'way out' would have been a withdrawal from the scene, a complete 'giving up' of action. I am drawing attention to these 'hypothetical' options in order to stress the fact that such dilemmas confront one with one's ideals more than with a rival.

"τίς ἡδονὴ σοι θεοῦ θανεῖν ἐν στέμμασι; / λυπησομεν τινῶν, ὧν λελυπήμεσθ' ὑπο" [Why do you choose to die (what pleasure is there) on an altar?/ At least I will hurt someone who has hurt me] (l. 1310-11).

In order to put this gratuitous mess into perspective, we can define the present part of the scene as the protracted 'da' of a loose fort/da game¹¹². The entanglement of the imaginary and the symbolic, the moment before their splitting is a self-reflexive passive vengeance of one's own death in the making- both vengeance in the making and death in the making- separated from each other and from the subject by a moment's breadth. The stillness of life- still life is a contradiction in terms- is the zero point of the oscillation between life and death, the fraction, the interval, *the nothing*, that is only to be symbolised by two terms, before and after¹¹³.

At the same time, the masochism of taking death upon oneself indicated by Creusa, illustrates another aspect of meaning. It brings up the real 'beyond' of the pleasure principle, *the pleasure of death*, that transcends and connotes paternal desire and everything that is going to lose its meaning in the next moment. But even at that point it speaks only one truth: desire is bound to the Other. Even when the subject contemplates, causes or luxuriates in the feeling of its annihilation, it only does so in the thought of the Other who will feel the loss and suffer- perhaps. Creusa could not have said it better as her gift to Apollo is cunningly human: *I want to make someone sorry* might just mean 'I want to imprint a lasting memory of loss upon someone and - with a little luck- make him suffer for ever.

Having arrived at Apollo's altar, Ion and Creusa may not have lost their lives but they have jeopardised something more valuable, the imaginary mother and son that have

¹¹² The 'da' stands for the loss of the object and its passage to language. The whole game is usually classed as a moment of masochism. Remember also that in a similar environment, analysis demands the dissolution of all the imaginary supports of the ego, i.e., of all the objects. This is what I mean by 'jeopardising' the objects in the reading of the altar scene.

¹¹³ In the fort/da game the vowels a/o represent the devastating experience of the loss of the mother. Metaphorically speaking, in our case we could say that the two times, 'before the experience' and 'after the experience' represent the devastating experience of coming near death: they are two related and distinct experiences, almost as symmetrical, distinct and related as the vowels o and a.

been supporting them all along. Saying *I am doing it for my mother/ my child* is not enough. If Creusa and Ion die, their beloved will never be reinstated in their rightful places. If one of them kills the other, their beloved will have to suffer the consequences of the punishment (exile, exclusion from the city). That they never thought of that drawback allows us to say, in a metaphorical way, that Ion and Creusa cause the death of their beloved 'unwittingly'. For us, however, this only updates an earlier knowledge concerning the imaginary and *fantasmatic* nature of the narcissistic 'beloved' objects: they never were really alive! Ion had already disposed of his imaginary mother the moment he consented to follow Xuthus. Creusa had already killed her child when she exposed it. Now they only 'turn against their own' for a second time. Indeed 'mother' and 'son' have been convenient supports up to the present. They have been kept 'alive' for as long as they could serve as external purposes and inspiration for daring plans, for as long as they could conceal the individual narcissism behind the pretext of altruism.

Ousted from the symbolic order and having destroyed the imaginary alter ego, Ion and Creusa stare at each other as if at the smashed mirror of their own refection. Though they cannot see that the other's misery is their own, the 'last nail' on the other's coffin comes from one's own loss of narcissism: "admonish your mother" sneers Creusa from the precarious security of the altar.

We have made an incision into the text. We have stopped its flow at the moment before death and examined the correlation of forces. We have located the confrontation in the general context of the masochistic fort/da game, considering it as the protracted 'da', which destroys the Imaginary and gives birth to the Symbolic. A similar crucial moment appears in the course of analysis, when the subject, having exhausted all his pretexts and having removed all the reflection of love-objects, encounters an absurdity that requires interpretation. Lacan reminds us that when the analysand has reached that point it is one of the few occasions when the analyst can intervene in a productive and helpful way. Let us examine our scene in which the Pythia will intervene from this perspective.

Have all love-objects been spent in our case? We just saw that nothing, fantasmatic or imaginary, can support Ion or Creusa at the present moment. An end has been reached from that point of view.

How about the absurdity? I believe that absurdity is represented by the arrangement of the scene itself. Creusa is clinging to the altar and Ion is standing one step from it, his hands tied by the laws of the holy place. The moment at which they are finally deprived of past, present and- perhaps- future, coincides with the exhaustion of all possible permutations of meaning, pacts, solidarities and grand plans. The end of permutations culminates in a visual representation of the last and most absurd of them all: having switched places, Ion and Creusa have done the unthinkable, they have exchanged fathers/protectors: now Apollo is Creusa's 'father' and rapist, and Ion is the 'son' of the ferocious Erechtheus and the polluter of the shrine.

But is it a fruitful moment? Is it a moment worth "the analyst's" intervention? We have no analyst, of course, but we have something better, the Pythia. We will return to her role in a while. The moment is fruitful because it 'voices' two very significant features: the problem, the absurdity of the super-ego, and the subject's position towards it. Ion articulates both:

"Ha! *The laws* gods make for men, -what strange error, what folly! Criminals should not take refuge at an altar, they should be driven away...sanctuary should be for the innocent when they are wronged. As it is, *good and bad come with the same claim*, and the gods give them both the same privilege" (l. 1312-19, emphasis added).

Ion does not understand, he does not understand what is going on. He expresses his confusion, and with it the core of the problem, which concerns the god's laws (the father's laws). As we remember, he had expressed similar *aporias* in the opening scene. This confirms that we are talking about the same, persistent, consistent problem. The short apprenticeship in the imaginary blunted the issue for a while but did not resolve it- despite Xuthus' honest efforts to brush it aside. Now it returns and it clearly shows what it involves: the god, this woman who refuses to fall on the sword, the law that allows one to punish one's enemies and another law that prohibits one from doing so. Ion the child is about to become a murderer without even having a clear idea of why and for whom.

We could say that at their second meeting Ion and Creusa are standing at positions identical to their first meeting. There are the same *aporias*, the same exorbitant demands (do as I say), the same regression to silence. But they have travelled the Imaginary of love and affection and they have resurrected and disposed their affections and finally they have reached the opposite point from where they started. They have come full circle. At that moment, a declaration of ignorance, or, in Creusa's case, an acknowledgement of the importance of the Other's desire, amounts to articulating and giving expression to the deepest cause for anxiety, unhappiness and fear. It is a moment of truth. A moment of death.

The Pythia's Intervention

The Pythia's intervention is timely. We consider it symbolic, not imaginary, because she does not offer love or knowledge. Instead she re-introduces ignorance by her remarkable inability to account for her own actions and the remarkable efficiency with which she both excludes herself from the 'vicious circle'¹¹⁴ of love and hatred and delivers the gift of someone else's desire. Hers is the first of two interventions, and settles the issue of death. The second one, that of Athena, will settle some aspects of sexuality.

In the following analysis we first examine the content of the Pythia's speech and the *concrete* effects of her word and her gift (the box) upon Ion's desire. The second discussion is an account of the *general* effect of her word also meant as a reply to some issues raised by the death scene. The Pythia is responsible for the reintroduction of the laws of signification along with ignorance. She encourages *the poetry of language* that encompasses the death experience without dwelling on death itself and opens up the prospect of a better future understanding by removing the danger and anxiety of the present situation.

¹¹⁴ Like the detective in Poe's story, like the analyst who gets paid, she too excludes herself from the circle of exchanges and loves by making her affection unavailable.

Pythia enters with an order: 'stop it my son', "ἐπίσχες, ὦ παῖ" (l. 1320) and with a single word dispels the fascination of death. The re-introduction of language, of mediation, breaks the specular identity and the deadly silence. It also represents the prohibition necessary to restore it in its rightful place. She delivers a sequence of mild specific commands: "σὺ δ' ὦμὸς ὦν ἁμαρτάνεις... μὴ ταῦτα λείπων ἱερὰ καὶ στεῖχων πατρὸν ... καθαρός Ἀθήνας ἔλθ' ὑπ' οἰωνῶν καλῶν ... μὴ σύ γε παρ' ἡμῶν ἐκλαβ' οὐς ἔχω λόγους..." (l. 1327-35).

She casts doubt on Ion's black and white universe but without exactly saying so much. This is her masterful intervention which we consider sufficient to restart the negotiation of meaning. The Pythia reintroduces *the word* just as it was beginning to wane. Then comes the box, which symbolises¹¹⁵ her discourse, then comes everything else. In the beginning it is *her speech* loaded with the prohibitory significance of "ἐπίσχες" and the effect of the vague reprimands and negatives.

¹¹⁵ By 'symbolises' I mean represents by using objects, examples. I use the term as it is used by Lacan who comments on one of Melanie Klein's cases [Lacan:Miller 1975, pp. 84-6]. It involves the visual representation and symbolisation of the Oedipus complex by the analyst. It is, I think, a very eloquent example of what we could call 'symbolic *gesture*' (the emphasis on *gesture*). Klein's little patient 'does not speak': "There is a subject here who quite literally does not reply. Speech has not come to him. Language didn't stick to his imaginary system...His faculties, not of communication, but of expression, are limited..." Having no verbal resources to advance analysis Klein takes advantage of the toy-trains in the playroom: "She starts off, she says, from ideas she already has, which are well known, as to what happens at this stage. I won't beat about the bush, I just tell him- *Dick little train, big train daddy-train*. Thereupon, the child starts to play with his little train, and he says the word *station*. Crucial moment, when the sticking of language to the subject's imaginary begins to sketch itself. Melanie Klein plays it back to him- *The station is mummy. Dick is going into mummy*. From this point, everything starts firing. She'll only feed him these kind of lines, and no other. And very quickly the child makes progress. That's a fact". Lacan commends: "you can discriminate between what is a function of the ego and pertains to the order of the dual relation, and what is a function of the super-ego". Klein did just that. She 'grafted' the symbolisation of the Oedipus complex upon the child's 'ego-related inertia': "[she did nothing other but] bring in verbalisation. She symbolised an effective relationship, that of one named being with another. She *plastered on the symbolisation* of the Oedipal myth, to give it its real name" (p. 85, emphasis added).

The Pythia recasts the past, the present and the future in terms of a wealth of possibilities. She presents the (notions of the) father and the mother in symbolic light. From now on they will be irrevocably lost but retrievable.

The god sets you free and does not need your services any more (l. 1342-3)

Ion is released from servitude, *having paid for his debt of life* with his (servant) life. Apollo's decision to send him away is the symbolic 'payment' for services rendered and not some sort of obscure favour. Thus, Apollo retreats: he had only been the temporary guardian of someone else's child, explains the Pythia.

Ion's desire to find his mother is symbolically recognised¹¹⁶: "τὴν τεκοῦσαν ἔκπῳνει" the Pythia says, and with these very words she re-channels Ion's energy to more fruitful tasks than serving the temple¹¹⁷. With the same words, the Pythia eternalises the maternal desire by grafting it onto Ion's assets, the child's purity and industriousness, the narcissistic remnants of the dedication to Apollo:

"Search ... All over Asia and Europe / You must decide where..." (l. 1356-7) she says, gently creating an endless, vast-like-the-world maternal desire, slowly shifting it onto the shoulders of the ex-servant who used to despair of his ignorance. Metaphorically speaking, to bear the burden and the vastness of the world means to look eager to embark on the most mythical of all mythical quests, to re-discover one's own image in the world, having, every time, to start from the beginning.

By way of explanation the Pythia does not *say* much. She supports her word with her own good example. She bears the other's desire willingly and thus asks for her desire to be borne likewise. Hers is a desire *of* the father and not *for* the father.

By bringing together the two fathers (Apollo and Xuthus), the mother, her own desire, and Creusa, the Pythia ties all the knots of the past with the present and the future, the right time in which everything will find its real purpose, value and meaning: one day everything will have made sense. This will have been the future anterior¹¹⁸ of Ion's

¹¹⁶ For the meaning of symbolic recognition; see introductory note of this chapter and Lacan's "The Object Relation and the Intersubjective Relation" [Lacan:Miller 1975, pp. 208-19].

¹¹⁷ *Ἐκπῳνῶ*, echoing Ion's own language of toil and labour in his monody.

¹¹⁸ See Weber [1991, p. 14].

actions, the very inspiration and desire that have their origin in the past and in the present day.

Her word, however, could have been just another command were it not for the context of the previous death. The matter is simple; you take it or leave it: not the enticing offer of a throne of Athens or a substantial reward of loyalty but the time of the signifier that takes its time to fall in place, exactly where it should be. This is the secret, let us say, the deep structure, in which in a very poetic way the 'procreation' of meaning acquires its first (foremost) meaning. The Pythia restores the sparkle of desire in the promise of seeing oneself in someone else's eyes and her general lesson is simple: you are neither dead nor immortal, you are alive, human, that is, subject to the signifier (as maternal and paternal desire) and by giving Ion the box she subjects him to the most essential aspect of the mediated relation: symbolic recognition by the other. Thus death is averted as the old demand of bearing the other's desire willingly is invested with the prospect of the subject bearing the mark of its unknown future and the poetic openness of the signifier. Between the stillness of death and the fearful life she inserts an extra time, the one excluded by the negotiation of meaning polarised between the previous two. Thus she provides Ion with *the only personal past* he can identify with in good time, his own attributes and the mysterious contents of his box. She fixes him with a signifier 'tattooed on his head' (see introductory note in this chapter), addressed not 'to whom it may concern' but to the one that is/will be really concerned. This signifier is both light and heavy but not deadly.

Because her answers are selective, they represent/embody the sliding of the signifier that does not answer the question exactly but crosses over to one beyond, leaves a lot to be desired and evokes the desirable without exposing, killing or choking it with over-interpretation. The Pythia orders Ion to translate the experiences of the day into the poetry of a lifetime. She interprets, she does not explain.

It is impossible to account for the wealth of Pythia's intervention, while the course of the play confirms its value. Let us not forget that her word is only part of an organised discourse, the meaning of which emerges in the end. We can appreciate her intervention for its value in terms of *what* it says and *how*. If we consider her intervention as another turning point, another moment with some significance, we can say that the Pythia 'educates' Ion and Creusa in symbolic terms. Both the content and

the effect of her speech are marked by the symbolic- though they certainly exploit the other side of her appeal, the imaginary maternal love.

As I said before, the Pythia's intervention is timely. Like the analyst who intervenes only when the analysand is about to recognise and verbalise the meaning of what he says, she, too, enters the scene when it matters most. Thus her intervention is not just another interruption of discourse. It is a meaningful intervention and does not fall on deaf ears. It provides *the third alternative* between still life and untimely death. This alternative is the function of the signifier as such 'that encompasses several meanings' [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 242] a proposition I understand in relation to what we know that follows, a search for identity starting from zero, having been branded by death, passing via routes that were till then considered unacceptable, for instance, willingly accepting the other's desire.

I said earlier that Pythia says nothing, explains nothing and introduces nothing new apart from a meaningless box full of clothes. There is nothing concrete in her intervention and yet it is the only suitable one. In saying that, I am guided by Lacan's comment on the change of the analytic situation once its similarity to the analysand's past has been redefined. The following quotation captures the spirit of the timely intervention: "why does a complete transformation of the analytic situation ensue as soon as the relation between the situations has been revealed to the subject? Why do the same words then become effective, and constitute genuine development in the subject's existence?...Speech as such is instituted within the structure of the semantic world which is that of language. Speech never has one single meaning, nor the word one single use..." [Lacan:Miller, p. 242].

The Pythia does not dwell on death, she *proceeds with the discourse* answering the 'wrong' question, another question, the metonymic remnant of Creusa and Ion's confrontation. If the issue raised by the altar scene could be articulated as 'what am I at the hour of death?' the Pythia re-orientates the interest to 'who will I be beyond this death?' Death is ignored, right and wrong is ignored and the justification of their causes as well. The Pythia transcends the core of death, *the nothing* they just encountered by re-locating them in the network of intersecting desires, theirs that comes from the certainty of a personal future, hers that evokes the maternal wish, the God's that evokes the king's that evokes the city's that evokes theirs, that evokes the

other's....The Pythia does not refuse them the pleasures of death so long as she 'saves' them from its fascinations. If Creusa and Ion have lost their narcissistic attachments and the mirage of the world with them, her intervention reads: 'you may evoke your loss but you may not cause it'. The Pythia turns despair into poetry and fuses the significant experience of death with the symbolic existence: you are *nothing* as you are defined by the *nothing* of death, but you may also discover you are lots of other things...you are nothing and you are everything as you were in the beginning- in Scene One and, later, in Scene Two. It is upon you to discover who you are but you *must* discover it nevertheless. It is *your duty and your desire* to obey my desire. The Pythia's gift to Ion is the return of his own gift/signifier, the infinite ignorance he could not cope with, the one he now welcomes, the metaphoric alternative to the instruments of death, to the double-edged sword and the twin drops of blood. The Pythia bestows ignorance and desire: to live and know who you are, to follow that eternally, to the end of the world.

Now Ion is ignorant and "gifted" (neologism for 'having received a gift'), none the wiser, 'rescued' by a mother different from the one he had set out to rescue in the first scene, richer through experience, a token of affection and the strict order not to misuse it. The Pythia gives no answers but advances an interpretation: 'do not kill' and then 'search', making 'her son' the living bearer of her own pythic word and the duplicity of Apollo, who speaks with her tongue, and her own desire, which speaks of another.

The Pythia imposes an internalisation of all the rules Ion has been playing with so far. She distances the threat of death, renders it harmless, makes it look like the first move in a child's game of representation of death, a clumsy representation of the equivalent mental phenomenon that demands the dissolution of narcissistic first loves, brushes past death and redelivers the 'mature' child and its mother 'to the entire world'.

What to do with One's Desire

Ion is given the world, the boundaries of the city and the vastness of the continents. Before happiness, before the return of the imaginary narcissistic recognition, there

appears a moment of reflection, a moment of loss and calmness akin to death. All pretensions have been abandoned. Excluding the dramatic necessity that requires him to show his contents of the box to Creusa, Ion will for the moment debate within himself what to do with the insignia of his identity. There emerges a moment of honesty and profoundness that loses its tragic grandeur only because it is phrased as a cliché. It appears to be a moment of free will, as much as a renunciation of it. We can place it in context: it bridges the prohibition of the desire of the father and the return of the doubt and suspense that have dogged Ion up to the day. It threatens to block the new beginning:

"Apollo was kind, Fate was cruel. All these years when I should have lived happy in the comfort of her arms, I was denied the sweetness of the mother's care. She, too, lost all the joy of motherhood, and suffered the same bitter loneliness. -There may be things I would not want to discover: I will dedicate this cradle to Apollo, and know nothing [οἶσω θεῶν ἀνάθημ', ἐν' εὐρῷ μηδὲν ὧν οὐ βούλομαι]. If my mother was a slave it would be better to leave her unfound. -Apollo, I dedicate to you this...What am I doing? Apollo kept these tokens for me, and I am opposing his purpose! I must open it and take the risk [ἀνοικτέον τάδ' ἔστι καὶ τολμητέον]. Nothing that I do can stop the course of Fate - What secret have you for me under these holy *knots*? You have treasured here the *love* I owe - *to whom*" [τὰ γὰρ πεπωμέν' οὐχ ὑπερβαίην ποτ' ἄν. Ω στεμμαθ' ἱερὰ, τί ποτέ μοι κεκεύθατε, καὶ σύνδεθ', οἷσι τ' αὖτ' ἐφρουρήθη φίλα;] (l. 1380-90).

It is a moment of decisions¹¹⁹, that recasts knowledge and the desire to know. Ion has just internalised the Pythia's representation of the paternal word. It is a valuable line of rare insight. Try striking it out and the whole play loses its edge.

No one rushes to action any more and, given the circumstances, Ion seems to realise the full significance of what he embarks upon, the vastness of his future search. To 'will' is to oscillate; to doubt, not to want to see your desire fulfilled, to want to keep it suspended and intact, to hope forever rather than be disappointed, and then to sacrifice that will, to succumb to the power of more pressing desires, like the desire to be

¹¹⁹ In the psychoanalytic sense a moment-of-conclusion.

'someone', to be part of the (symbolic) world, someone's son, someone's father, king and so on.

By a happy coincidence the description of the box fits with the definition of the subject *as a locus or a knot*¹²⁰ addressed to the other(s), here, to the one who can *untie* it. Let us say that Ion grasps what in psychoanalytic language would be the relentless flow of the signifier and the fact that one is born into an organised system that, strictly speaking, can do without him. Destiny appears again, in the familiar but now revised form of a choice that has already been decided, in favour of the symbolic sacrifice of the ghosts of the past: in order to go ahead you need to leave things behind.

What to do with one's desire? The question can be meaningfully answered only when it is placed/ asked in the context of the mother(s) and the father(s) *together*.

Ion has been asking the same question from the beginning of his ordeal and at the present moment he finds himself unable to sustain it or dedicate it to Apollo, the old formidable father/love-object. He is a little like Xuthus who has to pass his desire on, and a little like Creusa who must return hers to its Sender. Undeclared secrets fester and rot away, fulfilment cannot survive narcissistic silence. Ion cannot keep the secret of the mother to himself¹²¹. So he buries¹²² the fantasmatic mother of his dreams, the noble Athenian and his high hopes, in order to re-claim the mother of reality, the person he will try to find.

Giving Ion the luxury of choice, despite the certainty of his obedience, makes us think that the words of the Pythia, Apollo and later Athena all draw their prestige from the present moment. Shifting the emphasis from divine imperatives to human consent

¹²⁰ The idea is borrowed from Sibony [1977, p. 89]. He discusses the *writing-effect* in Hamlet. In the following quotation he echoes the *nothing* of death and separation, the *not* of the verbal negation and the *knot* that is the subject: "Is a writing-effect the *knthing* that arises between irreducible utterances, when knot and thing meet in nothingness, the thing exploded in language and the knot separated from its pure phallic dimension?".

¹²¹ If he had decided to keep it to himself his desire would have had no better fate than Xuthus' or the minister's in Poe's story.

¹²² I am saying 'buries' and not 'kills' because the killing of the fantasmatic mother has already taken place.

makes us realise that it is perhaps in combinations like this that the superiority of the divine 'will' is transcended and ultimately subjected to the same laws: gods and mortals define each other in a continuous negotiation of consent and desire, form and desire, giving in and taking back.

'What to do with one's desire' when it appears unsatisfiable and vast seconds before it recaptures the approaching familiar image? The answer is 'nothing', inspired by the recent experience of death. What it says there is everything, for anyone to see, and for Ion himself who holds the secret of identity in his own hands, his own solitary double (the box) that unites him with an even older past and naturally makes him the 'meantime' of his own present.

It is important for *Ion the child* to perceive itself as a 'knot', the meeting point of other's (sexual) desire that makes him the product rather than the recipient of that sexuality. Apollo wants nothing from him other than his obedience. As for the access to the mother, it becomes obvious that it passes via the father's word. It is not the first time that this happens. When Ion met Xuthus and consented to be his son it also became obvious that he would have to look for his mother from inside Athens, from a position within the organised society. From the psychoanalytic point of view this requirement (twice over) shows the Oedipus complex at work. That the road to the mother passes via the father only means that she cannot be sought after in the immediate (non-mediated) way of the primary narcissism. To lose the mother and to rediscover her demolishes narcissism and reconstitutes it after the prohibition has taken effect. Lacan reminds us that no big change occurs in a single stroke but here, third time around, we have a 'miracle'. No sooner has Ion renounced the imaginary mother than she appears, flesh and blood, before him¹²³.

Recognition

¹²³ From the imaginary to the symbolic mother: that means, from the breast, of the narcissistic image with which one identifies to the *whole person*, the individual 'mother'.

Despite its ample symbolic significance the recognition scene is made painfully similar to the previous imaginary recognitions. What distinguishes the real scene from the imitations it inspires? The clothes and the box? If the play has taught its wise audience and its heroes anything at all is to be suspicious of their own senses. Creusa can be the mother and the boy can be her son for symbolic reasons and that would have been enough. The claim of natural bonds should by now raise suspicions.

Do mothers ever lie? Do they know everything? Even the Pythia cannot account for all the facts. Behind the jubilation of the imaginary encounter there should return the doubt that accompanies 'good luck'. Indeed this doubt emerges but slightly delayed, later, and a bit out of context. It creates the circumstances for Athena's intervention, so we will defer its discussion.

Before that, we will give the recognition scene some attention. We wonder what would happen if Ion could *see* that the first woman he meets is her mother. What would happen if they could *see themselves* with the devastating detachment of the first scene. Creusa leaves the altar and, like Xuthus, puts her life in the hands of her future son. Ion prompts her with questions just after having dispersed his disbelief in her descriptive powers and together they look for and find the proofs of their common origin. They find them exactly where they were supposed to be, intact and preserved in time, like the olive branch in the box¹²⁴.

Owing to the independent corroboration of it, present recognition is the 'real' one and retrospectively determines all the previous ones. This is how, in a way, an event in the future has been determining the past. This is the moment they have been longing for and they are sure about it as soon as it happens¹²⁵. The *form* of the mother and the *form* of the son captivate each other's desire. It is immediately invested with love. Who cares about past mistakes?¹²⁶

The splendour of the contents of the box salvage the prestige of the recognition. The presence of the symbols, the snakes, the olive branch, the insignia of Erechtheus, can

¹²⁴ From a rational point of view the ever-green olive branch is highly uncanny.

¹²⁵ 'Truth' here is recognised as soon as it is given to be seen: the box is given to be seen and Creusa and Ion's desire rushes forth to meet its complement, the other, fascinated by the form itself. This is a 'suspicious' recognition, in psychoanalytic terms an imaginary one.

be translated into many other symbols, condensed signifiers that tell a story of their own, and in our case retell their story of the *paternal* signifiers in which the mother's action is entirely submerged. The symbols maintain, even at the hour of recognition, some contact with the Symbolic.

Their song of praise to Apollo and to good fortune is full of the words 'tyche' (chance) and ἡδονή (excessive joy), the very word Creusa had used to anticipate the gratuitous satisfaction that was to be derived from the boy's murder. The embrace of the mother and the son echoes other embraces but now it seals their consent, the *unconditional* investment of the world with love and the unconditional satisfaction of the demand for love which saturates the two and just represses the abortive attempt of the previous recognitions which had only ended in bitterness and doubt: 'well, isn't that what you wanted?'

Surely the play teaches us that an object of love is to be found where it was least expected, and here it is so present, so fulfilling and so precisely tailored to the needs of the subjects that it causes any loss disappear. Each one's devotion is unconditionally pledged to other's. They bear each other's desire. They have everything. They are captured by a ghost similar to 'falling in love' (*Verliebtheit*¹²⁷).

On top of that, further inquiries into the issue of paternity seem to satisfy Ion's wildest dreams: the phantasy of Apollo the father becomes reality, a reality beyond Ion's imagination.

Doubt, and Silence or why Apollo Must not Speak

And then this happens:

"Mother, to have found you is a dear happiness; and to be Apollo's son is beyond all my hopes; but there is something I want to say to you alone. Come; this is a private matter between us two- anything you tell me shall be as secret as the grave. Are you certain that you did not- as many a girl does- they cannot help it- become infatuated

¹²⁶ I mean both the 'wrong' recognitions and the exposure of the child and the near-murder.

¹²⁷ See Theory, Chapter Two.

and yielded to a secret love, and then lay responsibility on the god, and to avoid bringing disgrace on me, say Apollo was my father when he was not?" (l. 1518-27)

And to Creusa's very reasonable explanations based on the familiar ambivalent *πεφύκεναι* once introduced by Xuthus:

"Are Apollo's oracles truth or lies? This troubles me, Mother, as well it may" (l. 1537-8) and to Creusa's last attempt to make him both see reason and defend the truth of her testimony:

"That is mere trifling. I am looking for a better answer. I will go into the temple and ask Apollo himself whose son I am" (l. 1546-8).

The final part of the drama starts with Ion's doubt¹²⁸: *this is too good to be true*. It is the natural 'ending' of a circle, the outermost limit of all categories, knowledge, ignorance, happiness, which finally endows with meaning the search for identity. When all is said and done, when happiness is made tangible, the desire to know *the truth* takes its bearings neither from ignorance nor from knowledge but from *doubt*¹²⁹. It emerges as an unsatisfiable appetite that seems to be looking for its complement once more beyond what meets the eye.

This doubt is not new. It appeared in the first scene where Ion doubted Creusa's truthfulness. It appeared in the second scene when Ion doubted Xuthus' sanity. It appeared earlier in the scene, when Ion declared his ignorance about the function of the Law. But now he has everything. The doubt appears so misplaced and so unfitting, so out of context in the scene of general happiness, that it seems ominous. Had it been there from the beginning *nothing* would have happened- and perhaps everything would have taken the uneventful course predicted by Hermes¹³⁰. Now it threatens to turn *everything* into *nothing* by casting doubt on the foundations of Ion's own dedication to Apollo. Owen [1939, p. 177] comments: "Ion's views have changed since 369ff., when he had said that no one would interrogate the god about matters

¹²⁸ Wolf [1965, p. 188] recognises the function of the culmination of doubt at the particular point. Interesting and not-very-biased presentation of Ion's character (though the main conclusion emphasises the mythical component behind the plot).

¹²⁹ This is the adaptation of the Lacanian 'Truth emerges from error'.

¹³⁰ In the structural presentation of the plot we said something similar, that in scenes two and three knowledge never doubts itself.

where questioning would be unwelcome. It is difficult to see what he can gain from his question, which, according to 1537, is whether the god speaks the truth or not. The question 'Are you telling the truth?' will be satisfactorily answered by the greatest liar. V[erall] thinks that Ion's questions would have meant that the truth must come out with disastrous consequences, but if the oracle were so entirely the fraud that he supposes, it would have been quite capable of giving a fraudulent explanation". Indeed whether the god tells the truth or not is hardly the issue. What is Ion trying to do, then?

Is he trying to embarrass Apollo? Such arrogance could be inspired by the present love and fulfilment. Is Ion turning a blind eye to old troubles and displaying his new strength to his most formidable ex-love-object? Certainly mother and son are on top of the world, or- much more aptly- at the centre of the world, Apollo had been the object of ambivalence, and is, perhaps, now being fought with his own weapons. His silence, which used to drive Ion to despair, is now rendered suspicious and is, metaphorically, returned to him¹³¹.

The twin issue of that doubting of Apollo's truth is the sexuality of the mother. From the beginning of the story Ion-the-servant was eager to identify with the suffering and wronged mother. Now he is turning against her with malice. Creusa's 'truth' is as much at stake as the god's. Ion is turning *against his own kind* sadistically, and, without realising it, against himself. The worthy son of his mother, grandchild of Erechtheus, neurotic non-believer, is about to betray his happiness, to abandon and refuse the future and cut short the prospect of happiness recently founded on mutual trust and reliance¹³².

¹³¹ In terms of the structuralist analysis in Chapter Two this would have been Ion's passing the buck to Apollo, the completion of the last of all moves.

¹³² It is possible that Ion's behaviour reflects the deep division of the Greek society described by Slater [1968 and 1974]. According to Slater the division into *oikos* (household) and public space and the subjection of women to the hardships of marriage resulted in the following pattern of ambivalence: in her little son, a woman sees both her protector and the representative of 'the men' that have been responsible for her hardships. If we adapt this claim to our play, perhaps we can suggest that Ion, who is now beginning to enter the adult male world, is turning against Creusa.

An ambivalence characteristic of neurotic desire unfolds here. A simple law governs the oscillation of the child between the mother and the father: one of them is right and the other is wrong. It is impossible for both to be right at the same time.

And if we extend this speculation to Creusa's present defence of Apollo we could perhaps say that *Ion the child* sees itself *excluded* from the parental pair- that leaves him out of their sexuality, like a useless complication of a secret affair that makes him, by definition, the shameful product of lust. So, the more Creusa defends Apollo, the more Ion doubts his honesty. Perhaps Ion feels he is losing the mother to the splendid father with whom he cannot compete and consequently turns against him. Or, again, the pure Ion refuses to take his place in the family of deceptions. Any of these reasons or a combination of these reasons would be enough to explain quite well the last return of doubt.

The vacillation is cut short by the arrival of Athena. But as we know already, the last time a representative of Apollo appeared (the Pythia) something quite serious was happening. This time, the representative of Apollo is even more impressive, his sister Athena, and the occasion is no less serious. Athena's intervention is different from the Pythia's in the sense that she explains and reveals the future with clarity and throws ample light on her brother's behaviour. Her intervention serves a variety of purposes (to be discussed shortly) but I believe that its deepest effect meets a *particular desire* in both in Ion and Creusa.

We will discuss Ion's case here: When all the questions are answered, this last one, the most unanswerable and, therefore, the most irrelevant, must be referring to something beyond the meaning of the individual words. Ion is trying to say something for which the word 'truth' and the excess of the demand for truth itself are the best available vehicles. In order to find what it is, we follow the movement of his thought as he returns, after describing a full circle, to the issues raised in the first scene. What we notice is that Ion's *aporia* about Apollo's desire has not changed at all. 'Does he tell the truth' is, first of all a statement of ignorance and because it appears *out of context* at the end of the play, it points to the other moment with no context in the first scene, to the moment when Creusa divulged the secret of the rape. We had said then that she had created a rift between Ion and Apollo, and most importantly, that she threatened Ion's world by placing 'a child and its mother' beyond the mercy or, indeed, the

capacity of Apollo. This mercilessness and carelessness- of which Creusa accused the god- went together with an uncontrollable sexuality, a *jouissance* (analytic term), that appeared to transgress, or, better, to be unapprehensible by any law. In the last scene, at the end of the adventure, Ion finds himself to be the son not of the *brilliant Apollo* of his morning song, but of *Apollo the uncaring and the lawless*. The other father, Xuthus, reinforces the idea that sexuality is lawlessness. The classical oedipal problem of identifications emerges: on what terms can Ion seek an identification with the father, or, how can he live with the knowledge that the Other, the only Other of his life and death and sexuality neither speaks nor *cares* about the world, the law, the order?

In order to appreciate Athena's involvement we must return to the relation of the Symbolic and the Imaginary as a relation between narcissistic identification and the paternal metaphor. In the seminar on 'The Psychoses' Lacan [Lacan:Miller 1981, pp. 161-205 in particular] explains the function of the signifier in relation to issues raised by the question 'What am I?' and the Oedipus complex. We shall try to explain what it is in Ion's constitution that necessitates and creates the specific requirements for Athena's intervention, as another *timely intervention* parallel and complementary to the Pythia's, and not as a hasty conclusion to the plot of recognition. We will be *reading* the particular situation alongside key points in the section 'On the signifier and the signified'¹³³.

As we know, Lacan considers the subject's relation to the Other to be at the heart of both the problem and the answer: "I spoke to you of the Other of speech as being where the subject recognises himself and gets himself recognised" he says. "This, and not the disturbance of some oral, anal, or even genital relation, is the determinant factor in a neurosis" [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 168]. Sexuality and its normalisation,

¹³³ The section mainly examines the properties of the signifier and the Oedipus complex and not 'psychoses'. I must also say that I do not consider Ion (or any of the character) psychotic.

The *signifier* involved in the discussion is defined as a *not meaningful* word and is understood as "initially distinct from meaning. It is characterised by not in itself possessing a literal meaning" [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 199]. In other words, it is a symptom or a best possible expression for 'something' that does not work properly. As we know, psychoanalysis looks for that 'something' in the subject's relation to the Other that is constituted in terms of signifiers.

being a man or a woman, concerns the Other "in so far as integration into sexuality is tied to symbolic recognition" (p. 170). Being placed in a performed symbolic system that institutes *the law in sexuality* is, according to Lacan, what the Oedipus complex is about. When the particular oedipal identification has not taken place or is problematic "Everything that is said, expressed, gestured, manifested, assumes its sense only as a function of *a response* that has to be formulated concerning this fundamental symbolic relation" (p. 171, emphasis added).

Ion has not yet entered the Symbolic, properly speaking. He is at the threshold of the organised society and at the threshold of being recognised by name and relations. Let us constitute the portrait of Ion *as* the meeting place of other's discourses¹³⁴ at the moment he raises his voice to verbalise his discomfort.

Ion inherits two maternal interventions.

The first one is by the Pythia. It puts Ion in touch with his signifier of loss, *the purity*. She orders him to go to Athens *katharos*¹³⁵ (pure, clean). *Purity* comes from a time previous to all peripeteia and all knowledge and in Ion's history it is both an old 'myth' and an old symptom. It comes from a time before Ion decided to inform Apollo about Creusa's blasphemies. Now, by re-positioning him in his past, the Pythia confronts Ion with his own old limits and his own old aspirations. To be *katharos*, in Ion's terms, is to return to the purity of *before-the-misunderstanding*. But what does it mean?

Creusa, the second mother, delivers a different message. Her own change of mood invites Ion to forget and not ask any further question and follow her to Athens and be the successor of Erechtheus¹³⁶. The two demands have something in common. They

¹³⁴ Lacan would remind us at this point that 'the unconscious is the discourse of the Other', in our case of the god whose voice Ion is trying to discern in every discourse.

¹³⁵ The predominant meaning of *katharos* in the Pythia's sentence is, clean from blood, un-polluted. But it is not enough. *Katharos* has been 'Ion's word' from the very beginning, and it is from him and for him that the term has a particular meaning. We are trying to trace it by going back to the first other to whom he ever addressed this word, to Apollo.

¹³⁶ Creusa on the altar castrates Ion in two ways. The *image* of her clinging to the altar might be considered as an image of sexuality (copulation) which the child watches petrified (see "The Wolf Man", in Lacan's account [Lacan:Miller 1975, pp. 58-9] for the devastating effect of the coitus-scene upon the child). From the symmetry of the two characters in the altar 'me in the place of the other' and its sexual overtones can be easily inferred.

bear witness to Apollo's wisdom and better judgement, which in both cases guarantees the optimal result. But the optimal result is hardly the point. The issue here is that by different routes both the Pythia and Creusa confront Ion with Apollo, one by reminding him of his purity, the other by inviting him to forget it along with everything else. In both mothers' discourses Ion's own truth appears, once again, *alienated* in the Father.

In order to appreciate this alienation we must place it in a context *wider than the day's events*. We must place it in a context that would 'make sense' of having just lived through an experience of individual death narrowly avoided, of having been introduced to the sexuality of the father (as physical copulation with a woman) and of having been assigned- for future use- with a signifier, 'pure', that, as yet, has meaning only in the past. What does it mean, for Ion, to be '*katharos*' (pure)? What does it mean to go to Athens? What does it mean *both* to be *katharos* *and* to go to Athens?¹³⁷

In 'The Psychoses' Lacan [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 170] discusses the issue of sexuality under a similar wide perspective, that is, in relation to procreation. '*What am I?*', the classical question of desire, is recast as '*Am I or am I not someone who is capable to procreate*', a question that defines masculine and feminine attitude rather than biological sex¹³⁸ in relation to two special features: creation and individual death. Looking at the transition from the Imaginary to the Symbolic in these terms allows Lacan to say: "It is in so far as the function of man and woman is symbolised, it is in so far as it is literally uprooted from the domain of the imaginary and situated in the domain of the symbolic, that any normal, completed sexual position is realised"

In a second way, Creusa castrates Ion by her very defiance. She clings to the altar and she sneers at him, certain, almost, that he will not use his weapons (On the effect of mother's aggressivity and the castrating effect on her son, see Lacan [1948, p. 10]).

¹³⁷ *Καθαρός* for Walsh [1978, p. 305] primarily has the meaning of "unalloyed with foreign or base blood".

¹³⁸ Lacan discusses the sexuality of men and women in relation to the signifier in the chapters 'The Hysteric's Question (I and II)' [Lacan:Miller 1981, in particular pp. 161-182]. The main point is: the Oedipus complex is essential for both sexes and so is the phallus *qua* symbol. The sexes are related to

[Lacan:Miller 1981, pp. 177-8]. The important characteristic in the case of death and creation is that these two terms "are not situated purely and simply at the level of experience" (ibid). This is how Lacan explains his position: "The symbolic provides a form into which the subject is inserted at the level of his being. It's on the basis of the signifier that the subject recognises himself as being this or that. The chain of signifiers has a fundamental explanatory value, and the notion of causality is nothing else. There is nevertheless one thing that evades the symbolic tapestry, it's procreation in its essential root- that one being is born from another. In the symbolic order procreation is covered by the order instituted by this succession between beings. But nothing in the symbolic explains the fact of their individuation, the fact that beings come from beings. The entire symbolism declares that creatures don't engender creatures, that a creature is unthinkable without a fundamental creation. In the symbolic nothing explains creation" (ibid).

Anxieties and worries about death and the purpose of life, repeated inquires about them rather than 'getting on with living' are then to be considered as indications of some form of mis-adjustment in the Symbolic in general and in relation to the Name of the Father in particular: "The question of what links two beings in the appearance of life only arises for a subject when he or she is in the symbolic, realised as a man or a woman, but so long as an accident has prevented him or her from acceding to it. This may just as easily occur to anyone by virtue of his or her biographical accidents" (ibid). This mis-structure endows the questions of life and purpose with a neurotic quality, especially when death enters the picture. Man's relation to the signifier leaves out "something radically unassimilable to the signifier. It's quite simply the subject's singular existence. Why is he here? Where has he come from? What is he doing here? Why is he going to disappear? The signifier is incapable of providing him with the answer, for the good reason that it places him beyond death. The signifier already considers him dead, by nature it immortalises him" [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 180]. Lacan is, of course, referring to Freud's position that biological death does not interest psychoanalysis and to the fact that it is by a death, loss of the immediacy of the

the phallus in a dissymmetrical way, and that is the source of the problem. The woman has to take the image of the other sex (masculine/phallus) as basis for identification (p. 176).

primordial mother and castration, that access to life/symbolic is effected¹³⁹. When the question of life and death is posed by the subject it is, then, an imaginary question.

Ion at the threshold of the Symbolic is not neurotic. But it is in order that he should not be, that the questions of sexuality and his place in society must be addressed before he leaves Delphi. The question 'What am I?', then, naturally links his knowledge of sexuality and his own sexuality to the father's. This question is now posed with regard to the future. Ion is standing at the threshold of a new future for which he is ill-equipped. The day's events have been exhausted and in their place 'What will I be beyond the altar?' still remains unanswered. In place of a convincing answer Ion is offered the position of heir to Erechtheus. If sexuality is Apollo's issue *par excellence*, death emerges in relation to 'grandfather'. How is Ion supposed to take his place in a line marked by violent deaths and disappearances? How is he supposed to 'revive' it?

At the threshold of maturity, death and sexuality lose their *shame of the mother* touch and specifically 'return' to Apollo. The rite-of-passage to manhood and the city cannot be accomplished without an identification with the (signifier of the) Father. In other words, if Ion is to leave Delphi, he must detach himself from Apollo- the fact that the god simply sends him away is not enough. If he is to enter Athens as an Athenian-to-be and not as the son of an *epactos* (foreigner), he must receive a purpose, a measure of uniqueness and a sense of stability from no one else than the Father. Thus, at the beginning of the new life, Ion must separate the *imaginary* Apollo of his pre-adolescent years from the *symbolic* Apollo of his manhood, the super-ego and the purpose-in-life. Ion returns to the temple precisely because this last re-structuring has not taken place.

Isn't Xuthus an adequate symbolic father? In the previous chapter we concluded that no matter how deceptive the imaginary was, the symbolic relation of the father and son constituted in Scene Two was valid. Xuthus is adequate in so far as he installs Ion in a symbolic position and thus creates the conditions for the questions and the doubts to arise. He is inadequate in so far as he is a foreigner in Athens and cannot provide

¹³⁹ A reminder (from 'The ego and the Id' [Freud 1923]) Death for the ego is the fear of relinquishing all cathexes; the fear of death is derived from the fear of castration (p. 400).

Ion with a solid position. And, more importantly, he is inadequate so long as he brushes the issues of sexuality aside, exclaims 'learn to be happy' or, perhaps, 'learn to be a man', but he does not say how. In fact, it is in Ion's reply to Xuthus that we discover the signs of anxiety concerning purpose, social position and sexuality- even before the full development of the day's events.

In the absence of a proper paternal identification, says Lacan, the subject "will have to bear the weight of this real, primitive dispossession of the signifier and adopt compensation for it, at length, over the course of his life, through a series of purely conformist identifications with characters who will give him the feeling for what one has to do to be a man" [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 205]. If we recall Ion's identifications, as he presents them in his reply to Xuthus, we will notice that they have all been cursory and inadequate. Ion claims to have found happiness in the visitors' happiness: "Whether at prayers, or in conversation, the people I help are happy, not miserable. I welcome new guests, and enjoy their company, as they do mine, because it is always fresh; then I say good-bye to them as friends" (l. 639-41). He expresses his fears about his reception in the political life in Athens, he expects to be hated and isolated and avoided by the good and the wise (l. 595- 600). As for the identification with Xuthus, this is the very relationship that inspires the anxiety and is indirectly criticised in all of his arguments.

If Ion ever used the word 'useful' (ὠφέλιμον) for the name of Apollo, he may now wonder what the father 'bequeaths' him. Unable to accede to the Symbolic, Ion regresses to the imaginary past in order to find his bearings. His way is certainly aggressive. But as we know aggressiveness, as a mode of behaviour to others, derives from *aggressivity*, which is, first and foremost, a relation to oneself. In analysis aggressiveness appears at a crucial moment when the subject approaches his truth¹⁴⁰.

Ion states his intention to confront Apollo with his knowledge and a crucial but meaningless question such as 'are you telling the truth' because it is really *his own* truth and not Apollo's and *his own* role and not his father's that he is interested in.

¹⁴⁰ See, Theory Chapter Two and also Wilden [1968, p. 12]

Meaningless though this gesture is, it is full of significance. Because he is in need of a paternal identification Ion will turn to/against Apollo and will question his truthfulness, the standard of excellence and the mark of his divinity, his omniscience and his omnipotence from the point of view of the mortal that has lived through an adventure of appearances and deceptions. In bringing Apollo down in terms of standards, Ion is not attempting to denigrate the brilliant god but to humanise him, to make him a suitable father to identify with. If Apollo remains a god and a transgressor, Ion has nothing else to identify with but his divinity and his uncontrollable sexuality¹⁴¹. Both are impossible. It is in so far as Ion is eager to leave Delphi and enter a human community that he demands, *here and now*, the mark of origin-ality from his father. It is in so far as he wants the day's adventure to make sense and have meaning that he must tie it to Apollo, who has more or less inspired it from the break of dawn.

Lacan observes: "in order for there to be reality, adequate access to reality, in order for the sense of reality to be a reliable guide, in order for reality not to be what it is in psychosis, *the Oedipus complex has to have been lived through*" [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 198, emphasis added]. I believe that Ion reaches the point at which an identification is necessary and a direction. With the outburst of aggressiveness he signifies both the arrival at the crucial point and the return of ambivalence to Apollo that must be resolved. In other words, Ion lives the Oedipus complex and, therefore, Athena's intervention is *a structural necessity*.

Athena intervenes at the right moment. It is the second successful intervention and, like the Pythia's, destroys a specular relation but she also goes beyond that. She speaks, she clarifies and she fixes Ion's eyes upon a glorious future. Athena re-aligns

¹⁴¹ Lacan [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 204] comments on the influence of 'exceptional fathers': "We are familiar with cases of these delinquent or psychotic sons who proliferate in the shadow of a paternal personality of exceptional character, one of the social monsters referred to as venerable. They are often characters strongly marked by a style of radiance and success, but in a unilateral manner, in the register of unbridled ambition or authoritarianism, sometimes of talent, of genius. They don't necessarily have to be genius, have merit or be mediocre or nasty, it's sufficient that this be unilateral and monstrous".

the Father and the Law, an issue opened up in the very first encounter with Creusa. She assigns Ion *a mandate* and affirms his castration.

Lacan explains the meaning of the *mandate* and the meaning of *castration* with reference to procreation. He resorts to the relation of *the signifier and the signified*¹⁴² as it is used in psychoanalysis, and the difference between it and the relation defined by Saussure. Saussure claimed that *the amorphous mass of the signifier* and *the amorphous mass of meanings and interests* run parallel [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 294].¹⁴³ Lacan claimed that the two orders intersect, defined their intersection as the locus of the Other, the quilting point, the "treasure of the signifier". In general terms, Lacan describes the varying degrees of normality, neurosis and psychosis with reference to the quilting point. The *mandate* explores the potential and the function of this locus of the *Other* as the source of the energy and the dynamics of the signifier as a whole. What the subject says, in analysis in particular, proceeds from that locus, and the meaning of the subject's words is clarified in relation to it. When the subject is spoken to, the message is received, again, with reference to that locus. Thus, the employment of the signifier or its successful manipulation by the analyst or the interlocutor, depends on making the signifiers reverberate, 'resonate otherwise', as Lacan says (p. 323).

Procreation and the meaning of '*being a father*' is discussed in relation to the (whole of the) signifier and the signified. Lacan chooses the particular example for its socio-cultural prominence and starts by distinguishing the sexual act that makes one a father from the symbolic significance of procreation, descent of generations and structural order. He links 'being a father' to the *mandate* delivered in the form "*Thou art the one who wilt follow me*" [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 297], and he uses the particular phrase in order to highlight how the 'thou', 'the one' and the 'wilt' work together in harmony precisely because they depend on each other and on the Other¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴² The relation of the signifier and the signifier in Saussure and Lacan: see Chapter One.

¹⁴³ 'Amorphous' does not refer to internal organisation; as we know "the Signifier" is the perfectly organised system; with this word Saussure refers to the lack of any fixed relation between particular signifiers and signifying intentions.

¹⁴⁴ We have discussed these relations in chapter One. For the meaning of the "thou art..." Lacan relies on the properties of signification: meaning emerges when the last term of the sentence has been put in

The *thou*, says Lacan, has no literal meaning. 'You', in linguistic jargon is a shifter, a signifier without fixed referent and no inflection. What interests us here, is not the properties of the *you* as shifter but how it passes onto the level of the *signified* in the particular sentence, how, in other words, one is to understand 'you' as having him and no one else as *referent*: "Attributing autonomy to the *you* as signified isn't without difficulties" (ibid). Lacan observes. The 'you' as first element in a sentence-being-formulated hooks the other to meaning, prepares the ground for the statement that follows and goes beyond the simple call for attention ('it's you I am talking to'): "Let's say that in general it has the value of an introduction, of a *protasis* as we say, that which is placed before. This is the most general way of designating what precedes the statement [*énoncé*] of what it is that gives the sentence its importance" (ibid). As we know the 'I/ you' (and the other terms) are meaningful at the level of the ego, since they always refer to the separation of the *I* from the *you* in perceiving oneself as distinct from the other. But concerning the raising of the signifier 'you' to a signified 'you', or in Lacan's terms, to *subjectivity*, always echoes the oedipal adventure in which both the ego and the superego (Other) appear. This ego-Other relation is reflected in the following statement: "what is required to elevate this *you* to subjectivity so that, in its form as signifier, present in discourse, it becomes the supposed support of something that is comparable to our *ego* and yet isn't our ego, that is to say, the myth of the other?...We simply say that this *you* presupposes an other who, in short, is beyond him. How does this come about? Our next step should be situated around an analysis of the verb *to be*" [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 300].

To be contributes to the sentence both "the copulatory function pure and simple" and the "ostensive function" (p. 301). Lacan explains: "Which element is it that, elevating the *you*, makes it go beyond its indeterminate function of boredom and begins to turn it, if not into subjectivity, then at least into something that constitutes a first step towards *Thou are the one who wilt follow me*? It is the *It is thou who will follow me*. This is *ostension*, which in fact implies the presence of an assembly of all those who, whether or not united into a community, are supposed to form its body, to be the

its place. With this he emphasises the syntax, the order of the sentence. At the same time, with reference to the retroactive effect of signification, "meaning" is to be understood with reference to the Other.

support of the discourse in which ostension is inscribed" (ibid). By visualising - almost- an assembly in front of which the subject is singled out and receives the mandate Lacan connotes the social aspect of the Other as well as the paternal one¹⁴⁵. The subject's reply will define him or her with reference to the Other and every other. The proper answer- in fact the only answer- is *I follow you*: "unless he complies there is at this level no other response open to the subject than to maintain the message in the very state in which it was sent to him, at the very most modifying the person, than to inscribe it as an element of his discourse, which whether he likes it or not is what he has to reply in order not to follow it" (ibid).

What does it really means to accept the mandate/message? Lacan situates the difference between the imaginary and the symbolic identification at the heart of the answer. The recognition of the Other as Other and the end of the aggressive dual relationship defines the successful assumption of the mandate. Lacan chooses *ignorance* to represent the difference between the imaginary and the symbolic identification: it is one's ignorance that one pledges in the symbolic identification: "If you examine this closely, if *Thou art the one who wilt follow me* is a delegation, indeed a consecration, then it's in so far as the response isn't a play on words but an *I follow you, I am, I am what thou hast just said*. There is a usage of the third person that is absolutely essential to discourse in that it designates what its very subject matter is, that is, what has been said. *Je le suis, ce que tu viens de dire, I am it, what thou hast just said*, which as it happens means exactly - *I am very precisely what I am ignorant of, since what thou hast said is absolutely indeterminate, I don't know where thou wilt lead me*. The full response to the *Thou art the one who wilt follow me* is *I am it*" [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 304].

Athena delivers a message and a mandate. Ion will be the father of four nations. It is someone else's message, Apollo's, and is obeyed eagerly by Ion. In the prospect of being a father, Ion glimpses, perhaps, his own image coming from the future but the implied narcissism is second in importance compared with the internalisation of the role of the father. What does it mean, for Ion, to be a father? He hardly knows what a

¹⁴⁵ See definitions of *Other* in chapter One.

father is at present- an indifferent god or a drunken nobleman? - and of course he does not know what he himself will be in the symbolic position of the father. Why is he persuaded then? Is it simply because he is addressed in public, before civic assembly as witness? Is it vanity? Or is it sufficient to assume that his ignorance and the authority of the goddess combine to work miracles?

I believe that Ion's mandate makes sense and is accepted within the general context of the child's purity and the account of the father's sexuality. The mandate goes together with the final stage of the Oedipus complex, its acceptance being the corollary and the outcome of that adventure. Athena calls Ion to harmonise with the signifiers of paternity but that would have been impossible had she not known how to employ certain signifiers and how *not to employ* others¹⁴⁶. Indeed, Athena speaks of harmony rather than dissonance, when she stresses Apollo's providence and plays down his recklessness. She elevates him to the function of the father, the man-of-the-family.

For Lacan the Father is the ring that holds a triangle together, not the traditional father-mother-child triangle but one in which he appears as the 'owner' of the phallus. The new triangle, (father)-phallus-mother-child, allows Lacan to say: "The notion of the father can only be supposed as provided with an entire series of signifying connotations which give it existence and consistency" [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 320].

It would be wrong to assume that Athena restores Apollo to purity. It would be wrong to say that Ion would have expected to find a pure, un-sexual Apollo. But if the god must satisfy his desires and get away with it, he must at least make some provision for Ion but in Ion's terms. He must show some interest and care for those that depend on him. Care and provision for one's own were, from the beginning, the issues involved in Ion's and Creusa's argument about Apollo's sexuality, the accusation being, alternatively, of rape and negligence.

Athena addresses Ion's confusion. She assures him that Apollo arranged it in such a way that Creusa's pregnancy went unnoticed and later sent Hermes to bring the baby to Delphi. She thus bridges the gap between the father and the Law. Although Apollo will never be held accountable for 'the crime' he is at least shown to be caring and

¹⁴⁶ The expressions 'to harmonise with the signifiers' and 'to employ/not to employ some of them' are taken from Lacan [Lacan:Miller 1981, pp. 322-3].

provident. His *jouissance*- a fact- does not change but is moderated by his humane interest. The harmony of the world is restored when the Imaginary Apollo and the Symbolic Apollo take their proper place in relation to Ion's desire.

This is encouraged by Creusa, who seems more than eager to forgive and forget. For the child Ion, the loss of the mother, who by this consent and her volatility makes the accusations of the rape all the more suspect, is compensated by the invitation to be first in the line of procreation. Athena does not emphasise the line of Erechtheus but the line of Ion. Ion glimpses the signified *father* in the prospect of being looked up to as *the father*, the patriarch by the four sons and the four races. Ion will be disseminating meaning like Apollo and his words and will be procreating not like the birds (*παιδουργῶ* is the verb he had used) of his mourning song who hardly know the purpose of it, but for creating a new line, and receiving the mark of origin-ality from *it* in the future and from Apollo in the present. Being pure, Ion will be able to discern between lust and purpose, will avoid illegitimate sons like himself and will have subjected Apollo's sexuality to the regulation of the Law.

We will leave the last effect of Athena's speech that concerns Apollo for after we have examined Creusa's desire. This chapter 'continues' in the next one. I would like to end it with a suggestion about Apollo's silence. In Lacan [1959, p. 219] we read the following remark about the Name-of-the-Father: "Further still, the father's relation to the law must be considered in itself, for one will find in it the reason for the paradox, by which the ravaging effects of the paternal figure are to be observed with particular frequency in cases where the father really has the function of a legislator or, at least has the upper hand, whether in fact he is one of those fathers who make the laws or whether he poses as the pillar of faith, as a paragon of integrity and devotion, as virtuous or a virtuoso, by serving a work of salvation, of whether object or lack of object, of nation or of birth, of safeguard or salubrity, of legacy or legality, of the pure, the impure or the empire, all ideals that provide him with all too many opportunities of being in a posture of undeserving, inadequacy, even of fraud, and, in short, of excluding the Name-of-the-Father from its position in the signifier". I would simply add that because everyone must live happily ever after Apollo must be silenced

in order to avoid speaking in two tongues and arousing desires and demands that he cannot meet.

CHAPTER 4

CREUSA'S DESIRE: REPRESENTING FEAR

Creusa's Monologue

Undeniably, Creusa's monologue (l. 859-922) is a powerful piece of poetry¹⁴⁷. It is lyrical, profound and, though completely wrong in relation to the truth foretold, honest and moving.

¹⁴⁷ There seems to be little doubt about Creusa's constitution. [Ferguson 1969, p. 115] considers her impressionable and superstitious. Rosivach [1977, p. 291] thinks her point of view is narrow and naive and that she *unconsciously* places her actions in the broader frame of the earthborn's rebellion against the gods. He does not explain how this '*unconsciously*' works, however.

An interesting view is put forth by Wassermann [1940, pp. 588-90]: Creusa's ordeal must be appreciated according to the data of a time when women were little more than property. According to the author, Apollo's *choice* of Creusa as the mother of his son is wise and seeing only the violent aspect in him is unfair. It goes without saying that from a modern perspective the article is rather biased in favour of the male-Apollo. The reason I mention it, however, is that at a certain point, Wassermann, too, refers to "the *unconscious* ambiguities of Creusa's very words" which reveal an ambivalence towards Apollo. This is enough for the author to infer the god's innocence.

Sinos [1982, p. 130] draws attention to the fact that by the time of her monody Creusa has nothing to lose. He claims that Creusa had been seduced rather than raped and she "fumes at the personal affront of having been abandoned by her lover" (p. 131). He also suggests that her husband and Ion are hated due to transference of the feeling for Apollo, and that basically she is a gentle woman trying to come to terms with the god (p. 132).

Grube [1941, p. 270] considers Creusa's monologue to be the emotional climax of the play and draws attention to the fact that the main accusation, Apollo's indifference for the child is undeserved.

Burnett [1962] believes that "Creusa herself kindled her doubt into a flaming grievance; from her inability to trust Apollo she created a conviction that their son was dead" (p. 90). Further on, "Her passionate devotion to error is the cause of her war with the god, and by means of falsehood she spreads the violence of her own nature to those about her" (p. 98).

From a psychoanalytic point of view it is an excellent example of *the truth of the subject*. Creusa forgoes her silence and gives a spectacular account of the silent years. Thinking that she is near the end of her life, she gives an account of her personal history¹⁴⁸. A single idea underpins the entire monologue, fear. Much later, at the end of the adventure, Creusa will name it as well (l. 1497).

The second event with which Creusa designates her fear is her withdrawal from the scene before the attempt on Ion's life. She plans the murder, she provides the weapons and in the end sends her slave in her place. We will discuss her withdrawal from the scene with reference to the monologue and the figure of Erechtheus.

The theoretical background for the reading of the monologue is the Imaginary, the idea of aggression in particular, and the Symbolic, in which, for the duration of the monologue, Creusa has no place. We will be referring to psychoanalytic notions we have introduced in previous chapters. "Creusa's desire" is the continuation of "Ion's desire" and much of the vocabulary involved in that discussion is used here. For instance, we use the idea that the father is 'the ring' that holds together 'the mother' and 'the child' in the phallic triangle. We refer to the ego's relation with the super-ego and we use the 'quilting point', Creusa's fear, in reverse order: instead of arriving at it we pre-pose it as a guide for our understanding.

For Creusa's withdrawal from the scene we will refer to a special case of the *mandate*, the question '*Che vuoi?*' (What do you want?) which, in Lacan's terminology, represents the difficulty of accessing/assuming the signifier of the Other.

¹⁴⁸ At the end of the second Seminar [Lacan:Miller 1978, p. 286] language is defined by its *historical continuity* and to a certain extent by an abstract purity, while the subject's participation in it is defined by *meaning*, what introduces him in the temporal succession and, at the end of the day, his own private and particular 'meaningful' interpretations of 'the language' (ibid). "Each subject" notes Lacan "doesn't simply have to take cognisance of the world, as if it all happened on the level of noetics, *he has to find his way about in it*. If psychoanalysis means anything, it is that he is already engaged in something which has a relation with language without being identical to it, and that he has to find his way about in it- the universal discourse" (p. 283). For Lacan the subject is totally and absolutely, even in his actions, the subject of speech: "he [the subject] is the chorus line of this discourse, he himself is, if you prefer, a message. A message has been written on his head, and he is entirely located in the succession of messages. Each of his choices is a speech" (ibid).

The monologue¹⁴⁹ represents the moment at which Creusa is called to assume her loss, the loss of the child and her own future, and to account for them in language. She says more than she articulates and in that, we discover the real meaning of her speech¹⁵⁰. Creusa's words go beyond facts, they offer an *interpretation* of her experience as well. Inspired by the demonstration of love and altruistic excellence by her friends, Creusa will tell her story in front of the paternal figure, her servant. This is important because 'the Father' is at the heart of her troubles and the servant, benevolent father though he is, creates more.

Creusa starts with a concrete intention. She will declare (αὐδάσω) her troubles to the entire world in order to prove her husbands (both Apollo and Xuthus) λέκτρων προδότας ἄχαρίστους [thankless traitors to her bed] (l. 880).

The monologue is a synthesis of topics, all representing Creusa's confusion¹⁵¹. We will discuss the following points: the value of the monologue as a cry for help, the

¹⁴⁹ Creusa begins her monologue with the shedding of shame and the announcement of the intention to reveal a secret (l. 859-880): Though it is difficult for someone to strip off shame Creusa will have to do it because there is no reason to keep silent any more. She has no children, no home and no hope. She will 'ease the load' and she will prove her husbands traitors.

She turns to Apollo (l. 881-906) whose lyre inspires immortal songs. She will denounce him. Apollo approached her, radiant and gleaming, dragged her to a cave despite her cries and raped her. Creusa bore a son. She exposed him in the same place as she was raped. She reproaches Apollo by asking about the child's whereabouts and by pointing out the god's indifference.

In the last part of the monologue (l. 907-922) she denounces Apollo once again, shouting at the top of her voice for the whole world to know. Apollo is a traitor because while she kept quiet all these years Apollo rewarded her by doing a favour to her husband instead of her. Her child is dead- torn to pieces by vultures. Apollo is hated by his own sacred tree, the laurel, his birthplace, Delos, and his own mother, Leto.

¹⁵⁰ Ion follows the same course to a great extent. We can consider Creusa's soliloquy as equal to his own great monologue at the end of scene two- to which he receives the stern reply: 'learn to be happy'. As far as the immediate context of the monologue, the fact that it is addressed to the chorus and the old servant we can assume that it satisfies their enormous curiosity and rewards their loyalty. Creusa performs a striptease of her soul in front of an inappropriate audience.

¹⁵¹ In the discussion of Creusa's monody, LaRue [1963, p. 127] draws attention to the creation of a paradoxical effect by the adaptation of the traditional hymnal style to the expression of accusations by Creusa. Part of the effect is also achieved by the delay of the disclosure of the name of Apollo (p. 131).

representation of the mother-child relationship, and Creusa's relation to the father: both the father of her child and her own father.

Her speech is a cry of agony and the words for *crying out* are everywhere in her speech: πῶς σιγάσω/... αὐδάσω/ ὦ μᾶτέρ μ' αὐδῶσα/ οἴμοι μοι/ ὦή, τὸν Λατοῦς αὐδῶ/ αὐδᾶν καρῦξω/ Ἰὼ κακὸς εὐνάτωρ (ll. 859, 886, 893, 903, 906-7, 911, 912)¹⁵²

A cry is a sign. It is inarticulate speech with various meanings, a sign located at the beginning of language or where language subsides and emotion spills over. Considering the cries, we can say that Creusa has reached the limits of meaningful language and, at certain points, loses language altogether. The signs of utter distress convey what articulate speech cannot, the fear of the imminent disaster.

The cries are also related to the inefficiency of her resistance to Apollo. From a psychoanalytic point of view we could say that they now perform the protective function they did not manage to perform at that time. In view of a new 'violation' Creusa shouts out 'foul play' well in advance. She anticipates an attack similar to the old one and she raises her voice to deflect it.

Thus, we could say that her cries perform two functions. On the one hand they convey the fear of the imminent death, on the other, they constitute an appeal to the whole world, to pay attention and witness the injustice. In that way, Creusa commits herself to the protection of the public assembly.

The monologue is dominated by the tension between unacceptable sexual desires and the organised ego, images of fragmentation, disintegration, the return of chaos and the end of unity¹⁵³. We say that Creusa's monologue explores the Imaginary with our certainty of knowing what will happen next.

¹⁵² αὐδάσω and καρῦξω, to say/voice and to declare openly are mixed with exclamations. Articulate and inarticulate speech together create a powerful effect of spontaneity.

¹⁵³ See Lacan's "On aggressivity" [1948, pp. 8-29] for an account of images of fragmentation in dream and in painting. They all represent the ego's fear of castration.

One of the most difficult relations represented in the song is the mother-child relation. Creusa's representation of the exposure of her child¹⁵⁴ is a vivid account of her secret, but the word 'child' concerns her as much as her son. We begin from the end. The cliché of hatred at the end of the monody, 'your mother hates you', addressed to Apollo, 'summarises' a problem between all mothers and all children. Creusa's mother and herself, Leto and her son, herself and her son: there are three 'generations' of women that, according to Creusa, hate or should hate their offspring. The mother-child relationship consistently reproduces hatred, not love. Creusa participates in the order of both the children and mothers. There is herself, Apollo, and her child as children of hating mothers. There is herself, her mother and Leto as hating mothers. This hatred is punishment. The worst punishment for a child is the loss of the love of the mother. Creusa receives and returns hatred as mother and child respectively, and with that she signifies two intentions. First, the desire to protect herself by deflecting the hatred of the mother- exposing the child and pretending that nothing happened; second, by *exposing* Apollo to what she thinks is the worst punishment she thinks that makes them even.

In her account of the rape Creusa places her mother before and after the event:

"λευκοῖς δ' ἔμφ' καρποῖσιν / χειρῶν εἰς ἄντρου κοίτας / κραυγὰν ὦ μᾶτερ αὐδῶσαν..." [...as I was crying 'oh mother'...] (l. 891-93) and "τίκτω δ' ἅ δύστανός σοι κοῦρον, / τὸν φρίκα ματρὸς..." [I bore you a son, in dread of my mother's eye] (l. 897-8).

The mother appears and disappears at the end of childhood. The transition to adulthood is represented by her loss¹⁵⁵. Suddenly 'the girl' is transposed into the meaningless world of men.¹⁵⁶

Images of horror and fragmentation emerge: the child she exposed does not just die but perishes 'snatched' by the birds (ἔρρει πτανοῖς ἄρπασθεῖς...) (l. 903). The choice of the particular image is amazing, oscillating between the anticipated dismemberment of

¹⁵⁴ For the exposure of infants, see Patterson [1985, pp. 115-6]. Creusa's case is classed under exposure of the "illegitimate child" although the article considers mainly historical data.

¹⁵⁵ Actually it is represented by the shame of going to her with sexual knowledge.

¹⁵⁶ The plural refers to both Apollo and Xuthus.

a helpless creature and the underlying assumption of wholeness as he vanished 'into the thin air' -leaving behind no trace of dismemberment. Again, Creusa, designates her fear by projecting onto another human being and deflecting from herself the absolute loss of unity that dominates her speech.

So, regarding the mother-child relationship as representative of Creusa's fear, we can say that with a mixture of cruelty and maternal compassion Creusa 'wrecks' the famous mother-child symbol of unity and re-assembles it from an entirely new perspective: it represents not the union of the pair but their dis-union. Both parts implicate Creusa, who oscillates indeterminately between the two, marking the transition with the signifier of hatred imposed/ forced by another scene, by the rape and the fear of the father. The vulnerable mother-child relation is attacked and as such represents its own misery: it is branded by and evokes the hatred of the father, the vulnerability of the weak, the trauma, the absurdity of the entire world.

This loss is one part of a series of losses: of life, virginity, home, country and family. Creusa's experiences and the ineffectiveness of her solutions suggest that this is a sequence of related events. We discern *a pattern*, one which becomes obvious if pieces of several 'times' are put together. If the fear of life represents a loss or a lack at every turning point of life, we begin to understand that Creusa always locates herself at the waning side of her fate. Constantly under attack, she must conceal the knowledge of being under attack, *dissimulate* it and repress it. Everything happens in silence, outside language. From the disappearance of the family (her sisters), to the cries of the rape, to the present, the disturbing events are 'repressed' without leaving a trace and then return and reinforce her compulsion always to react in the same way. It is not Creusa's word that we believe, it is the consistency of her representations.

Concerning the rape, Creusa's self-presentation fluctuates between a self-reproach and an excuse: *I was not able to do anything but look, I was subjected to an unpleasurable experience for which I was totally unprepared*. Rectification comes after the fact: the result of the rape, the child, is removed from sight. The causes for anxiety, however, remain, and, as Freud says for the repressed instincts (see chapter one), they proliferate in the dark. Creusa is entangled in unfinished intersecting stories of death and by placing herself at the end of all these lines she ends up at exactly the same place that Ion had located her at the end of their first meeting: before no-future.

In Creusa's speech the child who refuses to consent to the loss of the mother meets the adolescent girl who enters genital maturity in a traumatic way. She refuses both, and in returning to the bliss of a before-sexuality-simulated-innocence she suspends her castration. Out of sight, out of mind. The child is nowhere to be seen and Creusa has taken his place in the line of Erechtheus. At present, which is another big turning point in her life¹⁵⁷, Creusa will react to the news by planning to re-play the familiar story one more time. Indicating ego-under-attack, the outbreak of aggression and the renewal of the renunciation of genital sexuality (regression) allow us to say that Creusa seeks to establish herself in an impossible position: the position of the phallus. Creusa cannot *locate herself* in the present and the past, in the role of the mother or in the role of the child, thus remaining outside both, in silence and in hiding, always anticipating the hostile future, and always planning to return to the eternal hiding which is better compared to death. Creusa lives *λάθρα* (in secrecy) at the level of existence.

Creusa's verbal representation of her relation to Apollo and of Apollo's influence in her life rewards close analysis. No doubt the hatred is genuine but between the lines we can scan a return and a plea to Apollo¹⁵⁸. Raped or seduced, forced or deceived, Creusa feels wronged and, invariably, demands at least compensation for having kept silent about Apollo's indiscretion. In this we are looking for the meaning of her speech.

In the second part of the song (l. 881-906) Creusa comes closest to describing the rape.

¹⁵⁷ In Lacan we read [1948, p. 25]: "This conception [an account of the ego] allows us to understand the aggressivity involved in the effects of all regression... especially on the plane of sexual realisation, and more specifically with each of the great phases that the libidinal transformations determine in human life...weaning, the Oedipal stage, puberty, maturity, or motherhood, even the climacteric".

¹⁵⁸ To return or appeal to Apollo does not necessarily indicate that Creusa indirectly admits she was not raped. Rape victims usually hold themselves responsible or accuse themselves for what happened, for being there. And though it seems that in the description of Apollo approaching her Creusa presents herself as deceived by his look, the demand that we are going to discuss is in both cases (rape or seduction) the same.

The passage from innocence to experience, the shattering of childhood's narcissism, is underlined by the birth of a shameful secret, a son and the knowledge of sexuality:

"*You gripped my bloodless wrists ... and you had your will- for the honour of Aphrodite!*" (ll. 893, 896)

The spectacular arrival describes Apollo's deceit as one of form and appearance. Creusa does not feel threatened by the glittering light of Apollo, by the mirroring of herself and the narcissistic replication of her own colours (of the colours of her dress and the flowers she collects): "*You came to me, with the gleam of gold in your hair / As I was picking an armful of yellow flowers / Whose petals, pinned on my dress, mirrored the same golden gleam*" (l. 887-890).

She emphasises *the appearance and disappearance* of form. *The deception-of-the-eye* is the brand of Apollo, the 'trademark' of the divine father.

We cannot fail to notice that in the second part of the monologue Creusa differentiates sharply between the seen and the unseen, describes her acts and inserts herself in a line of appearances and disappearances (of Apollo, of herself in the cave, of her child) almost compulsively: she disappears a child and re-appears a woman, beauty is an appearance and conceals ugliness, a child appears as a result of her ordeal and disappears soon afterwards. Apollo and his son, too, are two opposites in terms of appearances and disappearances. All passages to the unknown, to the new and the unexpected are marked by the same opposition: *appearance / disappearance*, loss and return, darkness (of the cave) and light (of the sun), silence and speech, hiding oneself and coming out, contemplating or planning one's disappearance and return, passive and active.

We recognise the symmetrical, eye-catching properties of the imaginary in her speech.¹⁵⁹ Creusa's life unfolds along invariable lines. Destiny unfolds along invariable lines. We are going to say, however, that this consistent imaginary summary is already a sign of progress. It is what Lacan calls an imaginary integration of the subject's history. A genuine interpretation and a fresh access to the Symbolic may follow.

¹⁵⁹ Based on the theory of Chapter Two.

Let us re-examine Creusa's relation to Apollo. She accuses Apollo of indifference, refusal to own up and amend his mistake, lack of loyalty and ingratitude and she does that by addressing the issue of life and sexuality:

ὦ τὰς ἑπταφθόγγου μέλπων κιθάρας ἑνοπᾶν, ἅτ' ἀγραυλοῖς κέρασιν ἐν ἀνύχοις ἀχρεῖ
μουσᾶν ὕμνους εὐαχῆτους... [Listen, Apollo, you who can wake to song the seven
strings of your lifeless lyre, till they chant immortal music to lonely shepherds] (l.
881-4).

The song of the lyre is an expression of harmony and bliss and immortality. The 'awakening' power of Apollo is ultimately life-giving. His sexuality, the reference to which follows in the text, comes very close to this life-giving.

Acknowledging his life-giving powers and challenging him to answer her accusations Creusa places Apollo within an imaginary exchange of questions and replies. Omnipotence and immortality are envied. Seen in the other, *alienated in the other*, the gifts that would have given Creusa a full life now cause her aggression. Apollo is called to reciprocate. In Lacan we find similar claims by analysands in the discussion of aggressivity: "take it upon yourself...the evil that weighs me down; but if you remain smug, self-satisfied, unruffled as you are now, you won't be worthy of bearing it" [Lacan 1948, p. 13]. In our case, Creusa's call for help is addressed to the god and if he fails to respond, to the entire world to listen.

Her behaviour is therefore remarkably ambivalent. Paradoxically, Creusa seems to identify with Apollo. Surely *the master of appearances* is a source of inspiration for the woman that has spent her life dissimulating her losses. 'The god' as image of completeness is enviable. The god as representative of absolute power, transgressive sexuality, and gratuitous satisfaction of any desire is indeed an attractive 'prototype' to identify with in silence. On the other hand, Apollo holds the key to her innocence, being the only witness of it. From that perspective, he must be made to speak, or, even better, to return the favour he had once received: Creusa's decent silence.

My last point about Apollo concerns this contradiction. From what position does Creusa speak when she demands a reply from Apollo? Her song is not a supplication. She does not humbly ask for help. On the contrary, she demands that Apollo should account for the child, in other words, declare voluntarily, that his transgressive desire has finally been made subject to the law. In that sense, Apollo is addressed neither

from the position of the child nor from that of the mother but from that of *the father* (representative of the law) whose figure dominates the song by fear and inspiration. This is Creusa's most problematical identification, full of super-ego harshness and indifference. The ideal of heroism, the defence of the house of Erechtheus that will soon follow, is inspired by the super-egoic father and allows her to project her own ego-ideal outside of herself. Seen from this point of view, the paternal ideal, Creusa's growing strength as her song unravels, now emerges in the place of the weakened ego, turns against the ego with the ferocity of an enemy and almost demands Creusa's death. The figure of the father completes the sketch of Creusa's dependent relations and enters the picture as the only possible strong reply to the aggressive sexuality of the husband.

In her personal history the identification with the father is shown in Creusa's inexplicable attraction to the family destiny: like the father, she has sacrificed her child. In the name of his house she will risk her life and her inheritance. Unable as yet to handle 'the Law' in its many poetic and metaphorical implications, Creusa will follow a sterile imitation of the ways of Erechtheus. She will borrow *the form* of the father's desire, his ferocity and what she thinks the law is, and will inflict death upon her enemies without noticing that she is turning the very same weapon against herself.

If '*Who are you?*' is an easy question to answer, '*What are you?*'¹⁶⁰ must be the most difficult one. If Ion must find his way in life, Creusa must make sense of her entire life. In the monologue she answers the '*What are you?*' in three negatives: not-mother, not-child, not-father. Instead, she moves freely from position to position, assumes characteristics of each one of them, only to abandon them in the next line.

she participates in two families: the first consisting of herself, her mother and her father (Erechtheus) and the second one of herself, her son and Apollo. The similarities of the larger than life father/husband and the disruption of the normal progeny by the death of children before their parents make the two families very much alike. In fact, in Creusa's discourse we have observed examples of the two families merging on

¹⁶⁰ 'What am I?' concerns desire, the subject's place in the imaginary (narcissism, love) guided by the symbolic (ego-ideal) placement (see [Lacan:Miller 1975, p. 414])

common points. This lack of distinction, brought about by the refusal of genital sexuality, the refusal of castration and lack of proper symbolisation of rape and death, allow us to treat the two families as one. The 'secrecy' concerning the family of Apollo and the fear concerning Erechtheus compel Creusa to 'play' with the figures of the mother, the child and the father with the ease of the child who constitutes the world in simple imaginary oppositions:¹⁶¹ lacking symbolic representation, the 'marriage' to Apollo and the offspring acquire almost imaginary status (in the common sense of the word). The speculations about the child and the demands made of Apollo reflect this lack of symbolic representation in their excess and their extravagance: not anchored on concrete rule, the family drifts in any direction and may be interpreted in any way. In direct proportion to the inefficiency of the symbolic relations in which she participates, Creusa voices her demand for wholeness, a regression into a state of purity and phallic omnipotence, by a variety of contradictions. She may have killed but she did that only to protect her wholeness (life). She may denounce to her rapist but he is the only one she looks up to. She may be inspired by Erechtheus but she is also afraid of him. We notice, therefore, that Creusa drifts from identification to identification without being able to relate herself to anyone; and so long as she moves, so long as she is not trapped in this or that position, she maintains the position of the phallus in the two triangles. We are speaking of the imaginary phallus, of course, which Lacan describes as a 'wanderer', always being elsewhere, always elusive: trying to be the elusive phallus, involves an eternal game of never being *it*. Speaking of the mother-child relationship and the prolongation of the imaginary dependence of the one on the other, Lacan notes that in spite of the bliss the dual relation is thought to entail, it only results in conflict: "Now, the couple finds itself on the contrary in a situation of conflict, even of respective internal alienation. Why? Because the phallus is, as it were, a wanderer. It is elsewhere. Everyone knows where analytic theory places it- it's the father who is supposed to be its vehicle" [Lacan:Miller 1981, p. 319]. Refusing to recognise (in the symbolic sense) stability in any of the positions of the triangle, Creusa signifies her uniqueness with demands of omnipotence inspired by

¹⁶¹ A characteristic example is given by Lacan [Lacan:Miller 1975, pp. 91-106], the case of Robert, in which the child begins to constitute his subjectivity and his relation to the world by simple oppositions:

Apollo, cursory identifications with her father, fascinations of solidarity with the slaves and heroic plans to save her city. Being no one in particular, Creusa can see herself reflected in everyone and, consequently, can see a threat in everyone.

The same essential *un-locatability* underlines Creusa's mourning of the child she herself had exposed. In "Mourning and Melancholia"¹⁶² Freud [1917] suggests that an identification usually takes place between the ego and the lost object (in our case the child). At the end of her own life Creusa will mourn the ineffective sacrifice¹⁶³ and will basically see herself in the position of the child that had once taken her place in the succession of disappearances in the family of Erechtheus. Creusa is the paradox-child that mourns for its own death.

Looking From Afar

We can reconstruct Creusa's second representation of fear and the desire for wholeness by examining the significance of *her withdrawal from the scene* before the attempt on Ion's life. Dramatic necessity requires her to be alive and non-involved. We can make the most of it, of the clever arrangement that separates responsibility from action, planning from execution, masterminding from being the instrument.

in/out. container/contained etc.

¹⁶² Mourning is a complex expression of death and identification with a dead object [Freud 1917, p. 251-69] with all the characteristics of lack in the external world and returning on memories [LP, p. 485], missing something in the object rather than the object [Freud 1917, p. 254] and in normal cases gradually realising the necessity to give it up as narcissistic interests recapture the ego that was taken over by death.

In LP we read: "The concept of the work of mourning should be seen in its kinship with the more general one of the psychical working out, understood as a necessity for the psychical apparatus to bind traumatic expressions... The existence of a work of mourning is borne out, according to Freud, by the lack of interest in the outside world which sets in with the loss of the object: all the subject's energy seems to be monopolised by his pain and his memories until at last 'the ego' confronted as it were with the question whether it shall share [the] fate [of the object], is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object..." (p. 486).

¹⁶³ For the fact that the exposure of the child did not fend off the threat of death for ever.

Creusa's withdrawal from the scene reverberates with connotations of deception of the eye and passive witnessing. It is consistent with Creusa's behaviour so far -she has lived all her life in secrecy (*lathra*). It is also consistent with the imitations of familiar features: Apollo's deceptive powers, the servant's advice to lie low and proceed by stealth and the return of shame and silence after the outburst of self-exposure. We, the disinterested onlookers, know that Creusa's actions are rash and unjustified. We may even condemn them, but we cannot say the same about her fears. Unjustified or not, fears simply 'are', exist and manifest their existence in rash and incongruous actions like these. Aware of the semantic proximity of *seeing* and *knowing* in Ancient Greek, we can say that Creusa withdraws from the scene in order to *see* from a safe distance what she could not access completely with her intelligence: the meaning of the day's and the life's events. *Creusa-seeing-from-afar* implies- in the poetic way that blurs the difference between literal and metaphorical meaning- both that she acquires a *vantage point-of-view*, a 'pan-optic' point-of-view, and that she is *watching* a spectacle in the sense that the little girl in 'A child is being beaten' [Freud 1919] watches her father punishing another child.

We *reconstitute* the meaning of the withdrawal from the scene because we want to understand what it is that makes sense for Creusa in Athena's intervention. As in Ion's case, we claim that Athena's intervention satisfies *a particular desire* of the subject and it is only by satisfying this desire that the goddess' intervention is able to prepare the ground for a future less absurd than the past and the present. Again a mandate is involved: 'thou shall be... a woman? a mother?'- I use the question-mark to stress the near-impossibility of accepting it. It is first articulated by the servant: 'do something fit for a woman', referring to killing Ion, and then repeated by Athena: "...you and Xuthus, too, shall have sons..." (l. 1589).

We *situate* our discussion between the first and the second form of the mandate. It concerns Creusa's *aporia*, her ignorance of what it is that she has to do, her fear of the consequences and, above all, the ignorance about the desire of the mother and the father, her parents, whose eyes she avoids in shame. Together with her predictions for the future Athena says: "καλῶς δ' Ἀπολλων πάντ' ἐπραξε/ πρῶτα μὲν ἄνοσον λοχέυει σ', ὥστε μὴ γνῶναι φίλους" [So Apollo has done all things well; first he gave you a healthy labour- so your family did not know] (l. 1595-6, emphasis added).

We are looking for the support of Creusa's desire in the deception of the eyes.

The central figure to Creusa's desire in the present time is the servant. He is the one who praises the worthy daughter of Erechtheus and the one who, like a real father, imposes upon her the responsibility to protect the family name. He claims he had suspected Creusa's past troubles. He is the blind old man who sees clearly through Xuthus' trick, and the mature adult who misses the apparent fact that in Ion's tent (where the attempt on his life will take place) he will be standing out- a stranger among friends. We could say that only a blind man could not really see that he is walking to his death.

For Creusa, this eager, protective, caring, altruistic father is the opposite of Erechtheus but no less scary than the latter. The old servant puts Creusa in charge of the house of Erechtheus, in a position usually reserved for men and at the same time asks her to prove herself a woman. With these two contradictory demands the slave delivers *a mandate that cannot be received* by Creusa. It cannot be received without her accepting the ever-increasing possibility of her own death. How does a man defend his house or his city? By sacrifices and death. How does a woman defend his country? With her willing sacrifice, by accepting death.

What the old servant cannot grasp is that by representing the caring father, who, nevertheless, demands a sacrifice, he 'awakens' Creusa's ambivalence towards Erechtheus. He cannot appreciate the fact that Creusa has lived all her life avoiding the eye or the attention of the father, despite the fact that she has only spoken of her reluctance to meet her mother's eyes. Creusa has spent her whole life in substitutions and refusals. When she was a baby she was not sacrificed with her sisters because she was too young to give her consent. Other children took her place. Later, when she was raped, she refused to expose herself to the wrath of her parents, she refused to consent to *having being raped*. Another child took her place and received the punishment meant for her. In these metonymic substitutions we notice that remaining a child is essential for remaining alive. Undertaking responsibility means punishment. On the same analogy the imaginary pairs: Creusa-sisters and Creusa-son indicate that a continuous shift within the family positions is also vital. The child Creusa, neither man nor woman, does not refuse sexuality as pleasure but as a sign of transition to a

state other than childhood. In resisting maturity she resists responsibility and death, and in resisting death, as we know from a psychoanalytic point of view, she resists castration.

It is not difficult, then, to imagine why Creusa will send her servant in her place. Not only is he the substitute fit for the circumstances but, also, the effigy of the father, Erechtheus, to whom her ambivalence, love and aggression together, is addressed. Moreover, the voice of anxiety that brings back ghosts from the past, deaths and narrow escapes, will be silenced. Consistent with the tradition of the play and Creusa's own conception of punishment, the innocent, in this case the one who unwittingly becomes involved, will suffer most¹⁶⁴. The present adventure is a singular opportunity for Creusa to deal with all her fears at a stroke.

Let us now return to the meaning of Creusa's withdrawal from the scene in relation to the paternal identification that in psychoanalytic terms underlies the acceptance of the mandate. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the key element in our understanding of her situation is the servant's blindness.

Discussing Ion's desire we arrived at the conclusion that Ion can identify with Apollo on the basis of the promise of the future paternity and can defer his ignorance of what he-as-father will be in view of being the first in a new line of descendants. In Creusa's case no identification with Erechtheus can take place. Like Apollo, he is larger than life. He springs from the earth and returns to the earth. He knows everything or can see through everything- otherwise Creusa would not be afraid of him. It is this idea, *the all-knowing father* (echoed in Apollo's omniscience), that we shall now discuss.

The father knows everything but what does it mean? Is this omniscience a sign of inhumanity- no human being knows everything- or is it exactly the opposite, the reason why Creusa is spared and still alive? And if she is spared, is it a token of

¹⁶⁴ Consistent with the play: in Scene One Ion has said: the god will punish the mediator... the servant is someone else's representative, a mediator; isn't the messenger sometimes punished for bringing bad news? Creusa, on the other hand, has maintained her innocence and her non involvement in the rape: but she feels punished all the same and so is her son; and so will be her servant.

preference and a sign of love? Is Erechtheus the seductive father¹⁶⁵ of the little girl's emerging sexuality? Does he encourage the little girl's preference for him as a love object and the rivalry with the mother? Or does he have a special purpose for keeping her alive, another sacrifice in the future perhaps? Creusa does not know¹⁶⁶.

Creusa has not so far confronted Apollo or her father, has not exposed the guilty one, has not spoken the truth about the rape. Covered with silence, early and later experiences of death and sexuality intertwine. Neither having attained proper symbolisation they exist in a limbo of *deferred action*,¹⁶⁷ producing phantasies (discussed shortly) of *never arriving at the other who knows*, never addressing to him the questions that need to be answered and always settling them in some other way.

This is the point I wish to emphasise in relation to Creusa's desire: lying in waiting, living in eternal suspension, waiting for the other to volunteer his grace or his information, is *the expression* of the impossibility of living, *not a solution* but a least painful arrangement, even when it implies living in pain. In the discussion of the

¹⁶⁵ In LP (p. 404) the scene of seduction, real or imagined was one of the first of Freud's attempts to explain early sexuality. It was later abandoned. We use it as a support/expression of another part of the theory, ambivalence.

¹⁶⁶ After the rape by Apollo similar issues arise: the mother is avoided- a sign of rivalry perhaps. The god must have a purpose and a reward for Creusa and another one for her son as well. He is the one responsible for sexuality, for the rape or the seduction, not her. She does know why this happened and she refuses to know as well. We could say therefore that interesting permutations relate the two pieces of the past, Creusa's two families as we said before, and transform the issues of sexuality and purpose of living into eternally deferred questions.

¹⁶⁷ In the same entry we read about the scope of the term: "the first thing the introduction of the notion does is to rule out the summary interpretation which reduces the psychoanalytic view of the subject's history to a linear determinism envisaging nothing but the action of the past upon the present..." the notion of deferred action guaranteed the effect of meaning both ways. Further on, LP (p. 112) define 'deferred action' by its characteristics: "It is not lived experience in general that undergoes a deferred revision but, specifically, whatever it has been impossible in the first instance to incorporate fully into a meaningful context. The traumatic event is the epitome of such unassimilated experience.

b. deferred revision is occasioned by events and situations, or by an organic maturation, which allows the subject to gain access to a new level of meaning and to rework his earlier experiences.

c. Human sexuality, with the peculiar unevenness of its temporal development, provides an eminently suitable field for the phenomenon of deferred action".

monologue we had said that Creusa refuses to locate herself in any stable position and, instead, maintains the position of a wanderer-phallus. We will now turn to theory to see how the subject that lacks the essential paternal direction/identification 'fares' in life and desire according to psychoanalysis.

In the "Subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire" Lacan approaches the issue of the suspended desire "according to the structure of the phantasy" [Lacan 1960, p. 312]. A phantasy¹⁶⁸ is an arrangement of conscious and unconscious elements employed by the subject in an attempt to articulate or stage his desire together with the defences against it. We say 'to stage' and not 'to satisfy' or 'to get recognised', terms usually associated with 'desire', in order to stress the different character of the phantasy.

According to LP, a phantasy is a *mise-en-scene* of desire in which what is prohibited (*l'interdit*) is present in the formation of the wish. Discussing the relation of the phantasy to desire, LP point out that they have a common origin in an (early) experience of satisfaction [LP, p. 318]. They summarise the important features of the phantasy and its relationship to desire in the following way:

"a. Even where they can be summed up in a single sentence, phantasies are still scripts (scenarios) of organised scenes which are capable of dramatisation- usually in visual form.

b. The subject is invariably present in these scenes; even in the case of the 'primal scene', from which it might appear that he was excluded, he does in fact have a part to play not only as an observer but also as a participant, when he interrupt the parents' coitus.

¹⁶⁸ The present version of the phantasy is rather 'streamlined'. For instance, I make no explicit reference to the object a of the drive. Any introduction/presentation of the phantasy starts of course with Freud's [1919] "A child is being beaten" and necessarily includes Green's "The logic of Lacan's object a and Freudian theory" (in the indispensable Smith and Kerrigan [1983]). The most comprehensive discussion of the phantasy (history and development) is Rappaport's [1994] Part One: Appearances of the Fantasm in "Between the sign and the gaze".

c. It is not an object that the subject imagines and aims at, so to speak, but rather a sequence in which the subject has his own part to play and in which permutations of roles and attributions are possible...

d. In so far as desire is articulated in this way through phantasy, phantasy is also the locus of defensive operations: it facilitates the most primitive of defence process, such as turning round upon the subject's own self, reversal into the opposite, negation and projection" (ibid).

In Lacan desire and prohibition and phantasy are incorporated in the dialectic of *castration* and *jouissance*. We are familiar with the notion of castration. We have discussed it in relation to the phallus, the symbol/representative of the adventure of sexuality, of the transition from the pregenital to the genital stage. The phallus stands for a series of losses, the loss of wholeness through separation from the mother, the prohibition of wanting to be the phallus-of-the-mother and the subject's acceptance of the Law of the father that bars the return to the mother and establishes access to the Symbolic. *Jouissance* [usually translated as 'bliss'] is the term used to designate all that is lost and all that must be sacrificed in order to accede to the Symbolic and the Law represented by the father. Both the successful and the unsuccessful completion of the transition are encapsulated in Lacan's "Man's desire is the *désir de l'Autre*" [Lacan 1960, p. 312], for which he explains that this 'de' implies both that man desires *as (qua)* Other and that man addresses the question *of* the Other's desire (ibid). We know that desiring *as Other* is the product of the oedipal adventure that starts with imaginary alienation and ends, hopefully, with the internalisation of the father's desire/signifier. The second case, the one that interests us here, implies a dwelling on the question *of* the Other's desire, and suggests the stagnation of the predicted development we are talking about. Instead of accepting the loss of *jouissance* and the mark of castration, the subject questions the meaning and the purpose of the loss and at the same time assumes that the Other, the father who prohibits *jouissance*, has access to it. The fact that the subject "imagines that the Other demands his castration" [Lacan 1960, p. 323] indicates an essential misunderstanding of the father's relation to the Law. Lacan notes: "What the neurotic does not want, and what he strenuously refuses to do... is to sacrifice his castration to the *jouissance* of the Other by allowing it to serve that *jouissance*" (ibid). In other words, the subject believes that it is the

father and not the Law (access to language, organisation, Symbolic) that demands this appalling sacrifice. Thus he refuses to comply. An eternal question arises instead (metaphorically speaking): 'Che vuoi?' ('What do you want?'). Emanating from the Other, the question confronts the subject with an *aporia* that belongs to him but reaches him as the aporia of the Other: *What does the Other want? What does he want from me?* in other words, why does he demand *my* castration and the sacrifice of *my* jouissance?

The way out of this misconception is only one: the subject must understand that it is not the father as real person that demands castration and renunciation of *jouissance* but the father as representative of the Law. The subject must understand that the father as person, too, is castrated as much as he is, subject to the same Law and not above or beyond it. In Lacan's words: "Castration means that jouissance must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder... of the Law of desire" [Lacan 1960, p. 324].

The Law of desire opens the way to 'normal' sexuality with all the consequences 'normality' entails. It opens the way to the regular interplay of form and desire (see Chapter Two), it disperses the meaninglessness and the absurdity of the super-ego characteristic of the problematic relation, it restores the 'normal' function of the phallus as symbol of having accepted castration (having or not having it) rather than trying to regain it (be the phallus). The phallus, explains Lacan, participates as negativity: "the erectile organ comes to symbolise jouissance, not in itself, or even in the form of an image, but as a part lacking in the desired image.. [Lacan 1960, pp. 319-20].

How does the subject 'survive' in view of his misconception of the role of the Other or the lack of the essential paternal identification? What does the subject reply to the impossible-to-answer question *What do you want?* he himself poses?

The phantasy is the subject's own answer to the unanswerable question. It is a scenario in place of the missing signifier of the Other's desire. Rapaport [1994, pp. 64-5] illustrates the point with a vivid example, Lacan's commentary on one of Ella Sharpe's cases. It concerns "the symptom of a patient's intermittent coughing" which Sharpe relates to a series of sexual fantasies. Coughing when entering the analyst's room, the

patient explains and elaborates in the following way": 'It [the coughing] has, however, reminded me of a fantasy I had of being in a room where I ought not to be, and thinking someone might think I was there, and then finding me there I would bark like a dog. That would disguise my presence. The 'someone' would then say, 'Oh, it's only a dog in there'. Sharpe queried: 'A dog?' And the patient continued, 'That reminds me of a dog rubbing himself against my leg... I am ashamed to tell you because I did not stop him. I let him go on and someone might have come in' Sharpe adds 'The patient that coughed'". Sharpe relates the coughing to the desire to interrupt the sexuality of the father. Lacan would probably highlight the fact that the dog is (the signifier of) the Other whose signifier (barking) has been adopted and then transformed into a cough. The dog is the locus of sexual pleasure to which the subject wants to accede. Rapaport observes that the enigmatic dog forces the analysand to ask the question, 'What do you want from me? The symptom (coughing) raises the question *as signifier of the Other* since the dog is not the Other but something that signifies in its place. Although the fantasy itself is totally inefficient (at the end of the day 'it's only a dog') the important point is that "*the subject does not ask what the signifier of the Other is in relation to it.* For this reason a fantasme is necessary so that an Other is produced, but for the sake of what? *a signifier precisely*" (ibid, emphasis added).

We notice, therefore, that the phantasy is both the support of one's desire and the 'screen' of the Other's inaccessible desire. Following Lacan, Žižek [1989, p. 322] comments: "the usual definition of fantasy ('an imagined scenario representing the realisation of desire') is therefore somewhat misleading, or at least ambiguous: in the fantasy-scene the desire is not fulfilled, 'satisfied', but constituted (given its objects, and so on)- through fantasy, we learn 'how to desire'. In this intermediate position lies the paradox of fantasy: it is the frame co-ordinating our desire, but at the same time a defence against 'Che vuoi?', a screen concealing the gap, the abyss of the desire of the Other. Sharpening the paradox to its utmost- to tautology- we could say that *desire itself is a defence against desire*: the desire structured through fantasy is a defence against the desire of the Other, against this 'pure' trans-phantasmatized desire (i.e. the 'death drive' in its pure form)" [Žižek 1989, p. 118].

Relating it to a more socialised and less theoretical aspect of the mandate, Žižek explains what is involved in the 'Che vuoi?' question by referring first of all to the difference between the imaginary and the symbolic identification (identification with the ideal-ego and the ego-ideal respectively): "imaginary identification is identification in which we appear likeable to ourselves, with the image representing 'what we would like to be', and symbolic identification, identification with the very place *from where* we are being observed, *from where* we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves likeable, worthy of love" [Žižek 1989, p. 105]. Identification, he explains, is not a simple imitation of images. It is more subtle, it relies on features and traits that are usually hidden, rather than on a whole image. He also observes that the imaginary identification is an identification "*on behalf of a certain gaze in the Other*" (ibid). The most extreme examples of this characteristic are to be found in hysteria and obsession in which the subject behaves as if s/he was constantly under the observation of the Other and is experiencing himself as "somebody who is enacting a role for the other"¹⁶⁹ (ibid.). This shows that no matter how malfunctioning or

¹⁶⁹ The entire quotation is very interesting: "This gap [between appearing likeable to oneself and the other] is brought to its extreme with the obsessional neurotic: on the 'constituted', imaginary, phenomenal level, he is of course caught in the masochistic logic of his compulsive acts, he is humiliating himself, preventing his success, organising his failure, and so on; but the crucial question is again how to locate the vicious superego gaze for which he is humiliating himself, for which this obsessional organising of failure procures pleasure. This gap can best be articulated with the help of the Hegelian couple 'for-the-other'/'for-itself': the hysterical neurotic is experiencing himself as somebody who is enacting a role for the other, his imaginary identification is his 'being-for-the-other', the crucial break that psychoanalysis must accomplish is to induce him to realise how he is himself this other for whom he is enacting a role- how his being-for-the-other is his being-for-himself, because he is himself already symbolically identified with the gaze for which he is playing his role" (p. 106).

A non-clinical example for the difference between the imaginary and the symbolic identification (given by Žižek) is the Charlie Chaplin's attitude to children in some of his films: "children are not treated with the usual sweetness: they are teased, mocked, laughed at for their failures, food is scattered for them as if they were chickens, and so on. The question to ask here, however, is from which point of view must we look at children so that they appear to us as objects of teasing and mocking, not gentle creatures needing protection? The answer, of course, is the gaze of the children themselves- only children themselves treat their fellows this way; sadistic distance towards children thus implies the symbolic identification with the gaze of the children themselves" (p. 107).

problematic, the symbolic identification always determines the situation and always affect the imaginary one [Zizek 1989, p. 108].

In the 'Che vuoi?' question the imaginary and the symbolic identifications are haunted by the subject's inability to assume the identification necessary for the 'execution' of the mandate. Again, the response developed, is very much similar to acting out and symptoms of 'under the gaze of the Other' type, but this time *the emphasis is on the resistance to the Other* rather the subjection to it: "the Other is addressing the subject as if he himself possesses the answer to the question of why he has this mandate, but this question is, of course, unanswerable. The subject does not know why he is occupying this place in the symbolic network. His own answer to this 'Che vuoi?' of the Other can only be the hysterical question 'Why am I what I am supposed to be, why have I this mandate?... Briefly, *'Why am I what you [the big Other] are saying that I am?'*" [Zizek 189, p. 113), which is an expression of the subject's incapacity to assume the symbolic identification that will allow him to fulfil his mandate and the phantasy an attempt to fill the gap of the question with an answer.

An example Zizek quotes is discussed by Lacan in "The ethics of psychoanalysis". It concerns the figure of Antigone as a representation of an impossible identification. Zizek observes: "In Sophocles' *Antigone*, the figure with which we can identify is her sister Ismene - kind, considerate, sensitive, prepared to give way and compromise, pathetic, 'human', in contrast to Antigone, who goes to the limit, who 'doesn't give way on her desire' (Lacan) and becomes, in this persistence in the 'death drive', in the being-towards-death, frighteningly ruthless, exempted from the circle of everyday feelings and considerations, passions and fears. In other words, it is Antigone herself who necessarily evokes in us, pathetic everyday compassionate creatures, the question 'What does she really want?', the question which precludes any identification with her" [Zizek 1989, p. 117].

Creusa's attempt to respond to the impossible mandate or to what it really is that the father wants from her, is an one line scenario: she withdraws from the scene and instead of *being under* the gaze of the father she *becomes* a gaze herself. Instead of addressing the question 'what does he really want from me?' Creusa assumes that the father wants her disappearance and she simulates that immediately. Unable to address

the question she has always postponed, Creusa reinforces her impression that Erechtheus wants to punish her the moment his representative, the servant, begins to speak about punishment and death. Consistent with being dis-placed or mis-placed and at the margins of society (being a childless woman and more recently a step-mother), she fails to see what good a sacrifice would be to her, or, how it would not facilitate her enemies' plans. In retreating from the scene Creusa is also consistent with another characteristic we identified in her monologue, the refusal to be trapped in any single position, woman, man or child, becoming instead the elusive complement, the phallus, of all three. The day's events give her an excellent opportunity to regress to another interpretation of the eternally deferred mandate: to be the living phallus of someone else some other day. With her withdrawal, combined with the murderous plot, Creusa refuses to be the daughter of her father and the bride of Apollo, so long as they both turn away from or against their own people with crushing indifference. But at the same time, as we said at the beginning, she does not demand answers. She simply postpones her question for ever, reacting to that literal and metaphorical 'turning away' (ignoring/ looking elsewhere) by making herself unavailable to be seen, *disappearing*, and directing *their eyes* elsewhere. In that way, she makes herself unavailable to the uncontrollable appetites of the father and the husband. She makes herself unavailable to serving *a jouissance* associated with cruelty and indifference and the expression of which is a transgression of the limits of violence.

It is the special relation between violence and purpose, violence *for* a purpose or with *no* purpose, that allows us to get as close as possible to what constitutes Creusa's inability to consent to any form of mandate coming from the Other and associated with being a mother or a father. If the phantasy is a question and not an answer, then Creusa is trying to pose the question of the purpose of violence and with it the question of punishment as subjection to the law and with *that* the question of the unpunishability of the one who makes or regulates the law. We notice that her questions are similar to Ion's, and we may also remember that in their first meeting it was she who first introduced the schism between the father and the law.

The phantasmatic game of seeing and being seen, of eluding the gaze of the other and even directing it to forms that deceive the eye by their likeness to the elusive original, is underpinned by a question with symbolic significance: to what law is the one who

regulates my existence (father, husband or even mother) subject? Unable to provide the answer to that question, Creusa stages the protest-reply by exceeding her ignorance. She exceeds it by eliminating it (the resemblance to Xuthus is obvious), and by merging a misunderstood *jouissance* with the violence she is trying to deflect: seeing from afar, Creusa anticipates the *hedone* (ἡδονή) of watching the murder of the impostor. She exposes her misunderstanding of the relation between *violence (death)*, *law and sexuality* by countless failed approximations of the important question. Having no measure other than the gaze she must evade, Creusa swings from exaggeration to exaggeration, from Apollo's immortality, to his overpowering sexuality, to Ion's death, to statements that betray an immense ignorance of their very content:

"Kneel there, and they dare not touch you" says the chorus, advising Creusa to seek protection at Apollo's altar. "*But the law condemns me to death*" replies Creusa (l. 1256) without explaining what she means by this 'but'.

Due to some questions concerning the relation of law, death and sexuality, Creusa becomes a very special phallus. Usually attributed to the child's desire to be the phallus the mother, the imaginary, regressive expression of the refusal of castration acquires its significance in relation to the desire of the mother. The mother wants the child-phallus but the father separates them to the dismay of both. This is the typical pre-oedipal scenario. But in Creusa's case the mother is avoided, her gaze is avoided as much as the father's. The mother is swallowed up by the immense question. Looking from a safe distance, Creusa is the phallus of no one but herself, thus designating her completeness and the refusal of sacrifice (be it of life or castration) with a total eclipse *in order to* return again. In the metaphor(s) of desire Apollo-the-sun, whose immortality is related to the regular appearance and disappearance, is the only appropriate, impossible model for her desire.

Neurotic desire demands what it cannot offer, death or fear or any other mark of excellence to which it cannot subscribe. It refuses to subscribe to the Other's *jouissance* and in reality stages this refusal by elevating the 'elements of the scene' into unparalleled virtue measured against which the subject finds himself lacking, lesser, inadequate, worse off, condemned on the one hand to dissimulating his failure,

desiring, on the other, the subjection of the father to the same faults. Ion and Creusa love the excellence of Apollo and Erechtheus and at the same time hate it for it leaves them out. But if the father does not bat an eyelid at the misery he causes will he not be moved by being told that someone knows more-than-him or more-than-he-would-like him to know? The demand and the abhorrence of knowledge starts from here; it is applicable knowledge, dangerous knowledge and potentially deadly knowledge, of the same rank as the poison and the sword.

The imaginary, the world of symmetries and polarities, does not have room for two of the same kind and in the same way does not allow second chance a second time. In the imaginary there is always only one fool, usurper, rival and it's always the other. And this happens because the subject has always to be ahead, anticipating and expecting, never-to-be-surprised itself.

I would say that the subject is *in competition with itself*, dedicated (its desire being dedicated) to never reaching its completion for fear of being exhausted there. At the end of day, desire is weakness, desire is lack and 'I' do not lack anything.

We could say that Ion and Creusa could be classed as neurotic for they desire to be removed or to remove the gaze of the father as much as preserving it in order to defeat it. Are we describing a desire that can have it either way? As much as we are describing a desire that could have it neither way! Travelling the distance from interpersonal relations to the reassembled phantasy, we can see the entire vocabulary of the play subjected to a very simple principle, the change into the opposite which appears to be ungoverned and ungovernable. At the heart of the phantasy and at the surface of human relations what 'hurts more' is the dream-like fluidity of the world. An obsession with appearances emerges. At the heart of the phantasy we find only a rhythm¹⁷⁰. It is elusive, it is *metaptosis* going on for ever, an eternal repetition of the same old story, surprise and anticipation, recognition and non-recognition, knowledge and ignorance changing into one another without an apparent and fixed law.

To Ion and Creusa who have known 'alterity' and who have been made to become man and woman too late too soon it should not be very difficult to recognise that this desire

will always remain elusive and essentially catastrophic. If you see from where the other sees you may also turn against yourself with his indifference. There the desire to remain obscure and live, time-honoured and familiar, clashes with the desire to see from the place of the Other, as Other, with the Other- even one's own death. If the mark of excellence is death then witnessing one's own death from a distance (a desire we can logically infer from the structure of the phantasy and from the successive identifications) refers us to an inexplicable paradoxical and condensed expression which always loses a part of its meaning once it is opened up and subjected to interpretation. It might mean all or nothing, to outwit the father, die after him as is natural, not by him, take his place, reject his law, consider the punishment merging with desire, commit suicide in order not to fall into the hands of the other, seeing oneself in the sacrificed other, in the child and in the servant; a wealth of images and signifiers (or images consisting of signifiers) which the subject organises, *directs and stages with himself as actors as well as director*.

With the *agon* of one's life annulled not by the other but by the incorrect assumptions the desire of blindness entails, there remains a gap, a nothing, in the place of 'life', in the place of the missing phallus. What law and what justice can keep the subject from falling into that void? To *Whom may it concern?* What law of city or god can be invoked there without its turning against the subject the moment it is applied? *I kill and at the same time I commit suicide*. Nothing.

In the end rescue (not salvation) comes from what is missed, from the only 'element' that was apparently scorned as being unimportant: *the obvious*. The obvious as external reality, as the world of visible, concrete *objects*. The Pythia introduces it with uncanny precision when she questions their point of view, encourages them to withdraw their gaze from what does not meet the eye and concentrate, instead, on what is before their eyes. The obvious, as outside, real world, competes with the nothing. As stable reality it supplants the endless mourning which has supported the subject so far and mediates the frightening appearances and disappearances by

¹⁷⁰ This is as close as I can get to the function of the drive at the heart of the unconscious and the phantasy and the compulsion to repeat. From a different perspective: a rhythm can develop into a song,

containing both. It appeals with the simplicity of 'what is in front of your eyes', that is, what is *outside* you but can still be missed. It is not a coincidence that it comes only after the encounter with the invisible has been exhausted.

Creusa and Ion will fall into each other's arms in perfect narcissistic unison but this comes only after the mediation of the prophetess and the goddess which settles another imaginary relationship. As for the Other's desire we might just be able to argue that it finally succumbs to the mark of castration in Athena's words: "πρῶτα μὲν / ἴ' ἀνοσον λοχεύει σ', ὥστε μὴ γνῶναι φίλους" [first he gave you a healthy labour so your family did not know] (l. 1595-6) and further down: "νῦν οὖν σιώπα, παῖς ὁδ' ὥς πέφυκε σός, ἵν' ἡ δόκησις Ξοῦθον ἡδέως ἔχῃ" [now, tell no one that [Ion] is your true son; so that Xuthus may enjoy the happiness that you know to be yours] (l. 1601-2). In the deception, those who were close saw nothing because Apollo arranged it so and in the deception of the father/husband - let him enjoy his delusion- we may recognise the Other's signifier. It emerges in language before it is repressed by silence. It restores the effectiveness of the symbolic, law and order in their social dimensions, by restoring *the laws of language*. Isn't it common place that law never loses, that it comes out stronger than ever after every act of transgression?

A fine coincidence highlights the point and allows us to use metaphoric language: "φεύγωμεν, ὦ τεκῶσα, μὴ τὰ δαιμόνων ὀρώμεν- εἰ μὴ καιρὸς ἔσθ' ἡμᾶς δρᾶν" [come away, mother, we must not look on the face of a god, unless- unless perhaps it is timely that we should] (l. 1551-2) says Ion on seeing Athena approaching. To avert one's eyes, even to think about it, puts 'looking on' and 'having one's eyes fixed' into perspective. If you do not want to be fascinated don't look. But, then again, perhaps we should look this time... No absolute prohibition would have worked against curiosity.

What Athena says by admitting that Erechtheus was blinded and not blind and that Apollo was slightly 'off the mark' is indeed the law *of/as* Loxias. It finds its

justification in the future and proceeds according to the following situation-bound definition: the opposite of looking on is not being looked on but *looking awry*¹⁷¹.

In Holbein's "*The Ambassadors*" (discussed by Lacan [1973, p. 88]) there is a skull at the lower front part of the painting. It is distorted and it only appears as a skull when looked at from an angle. According to Lacan it is *phallic ghost* that appears at the forefront of the picture when one looks at it from a certain angle. He notes: "If one does not stress the dialectic of desire one does not understand why the gaze of others should disorganise the field of perception. It is because the subject in question is not the reflexive consciousness, but that of desire. One thinks it is a question of the geometrical eye-point, whereas it is a quite different eye- that which flies in the foreground of *The Ambassadors*" (p. 89). We can 'appropriate' this statement- it belongs to painting- in order to highlight the effectiveness of 'looking awry'. It concerns desire, not the conscious subject. It allows different things to appear depending on the perspective.

Ion and Creusa have been exchanging places with others, imagining themselves exposed, wanting to see from afar, looking, in other words, *for perspective*. It could be said that 'perspective' is the essence of the play, its endless permutations, symmetries and regular reversals, the copying of positions and its polarities alongside the desire for the recognition of desire. Would it be an exaggeration to say that the subject wants to 'sustain' its desire, destiny and tradition, but not 'bear the burden' of it?

There the disappearance of the father, his own dropping out of the scene becomes part of the meaning. Everyone should pay for his folly. Everyone should suffer the consequences of his ignorance¹⁷² -and we can say that Creusa and Ion have been paying for their ignorance by living it. The gaze of the (imaginary) father is neutralised and the phallus is 'stolen' away from him, the phantasy loses its meaning

¹⁷¹ This is actually the title of Žižek's [1991] book on Hollywood cinema themes analysed in a Lacanian way.

¹⁷² There he bears the consequences of his acts - Erechtheus is swallowed by the earth and is punished for the killings approximately by paying with his own life, or he is punished for another crime not being exempt by the law because of his eminence (but also, you are always punished even when you have done the right thing, or the ignorant thing; at the heart of the comedy there lies the Greek tragedy).

but the Law does appear strengthened by it. The new phallus is sought 'outside' oneself in the 'mature' genital order.¹⁷³

First an aporia appears: what governs *reality and appearance*? There is something beyond appearance and it has to be the real thing.

Then comes peripeteia: reality vs. appearance is superseded by *appearance vs. disappearance*. Appearance means to be *made visible*, to be seen and ultimately to be exposed to the eyes of others. Disappearance connotes death, elimination but also withdrawal from the eyes of the others. Disappearance in this sense is non-involvement and *invisibility*. *Invisibility* connotes deception- of the eyes at least. Thus disappearance establishes a play of meaning between elimination and 'occultation'. The subject supports/ is supported by the circuit of meaning, its own disappearance, and it cannot escape the reflexive return of the other meaning which connotes *its own deception*! But the substitution of disappearance by deception neutralises the difference between appearance and disappearance: they are actually coming close too close: *appearance and deception*. Deception of the eye: of the other's eye; of your own: if you close your eyes the world disappears. *Deception connotes absence, lack*, something that isn't there but must be presumed present, a phallus that is instituted because of its lack. Xuthus is deceived by being given what is not. The father is deceived by what is not. Reality as the domain of consciousness and the senses is deceptive, thus it is bearable.

And when all ends well the entire mechanism is swallowed up by 'nothing' which encompasses the entire play and envelopes it in silence. The obvious then rules the world (the deceptive absent phallus). Doubt may return to upset it all and start a new game/play.

In the end Ion and Creusa save each other when their 'rescue' ambition (to rescue the mother or the father) goes awry. The comeback of the dead may be scary or may be a joke. Like his earthly father (Xuthus), Ion carries weapons, comes from outside but despite appearances he comes as a friend not as an enemy. The same applies to Creusa.

¹⁷³ See Lacan [1973] "From love to the libido" for the transition from the drive to genital love and object relations.

CONCLUSION

These concluding remarks are not a separate chapter. In a sense they summarise the main features and directions of the previous chapters in order to draw them all together

"Where to start out from? *In medias res*? ἔξω τοῦ δράματος? Can a hermeneutic go beyond the question of "where to enter the circle"? "It is difficult to find the beginning. Or better: it is difficult to begin at the beginning and not to try to go further back". Can it be that an investigation of this play can do (no) more than proceed from its origins? Even in the search for them. Can it go beyond the (circular or linear) fulfilment of (a) destiny?" These are Goldhill's [1984, p. 179] opening lines of his 'Exigesis: Oedipus Rex'. The difference between *the* beginning and *a* beginning is an essential one. The same question can be posed about the end. Have we reached *the* end or *an* end? Greek drama always reaches the beginning and if we 'estrangle' ourselves enough to think about it rather than to take it for granted we may discover that the whole edifice closes upon its own lines and leaves us out: that's all there is, we have reached the beginning. From a psychoanalytic point of view, the question would be: does *reaching the beginning* mean we arrive at a tautology, or does the gradual metaphoric and metonymic displacement of meaning lead to a new beginning? But then again, it is not just any beginning we are concerned with but *the beginning of speech* and this can only be symbolic. From the psychoanalytic point of view it could not be anything else. He who speaks is. He who does not speak is not. The play and analysis are conducted through the medium of language and they delimit themselves on that. They use the signifier to maximum capacity.

The time is set. Whatever is to happen, must happen now. This is another common point between the play and psychoanalysis: the present. They both deal at present, here and now, with an experience represented in language. The experience comes from the past and because it concerns the future and extends to the future it must be settled now. *Ion* is not a drama in the tragedy-proper sense. There is a second chance, a second time around. But within the span of the day old fears and old tactics are

awakened. They provide the guide to priorities, to the beginning: first things first: what must be settled here and now is where we begin.

Like a human being the play is unique. It reflects the uniqueness of its co-ordinates and of the individual experience. Plots may be familiar, characters may be familiar, even their words may be familiar but so are the letters of the alphabet, the terms used by a particular theory to describe and organise its discourse and to approach a text in the capacity of a metalanguage.

In 'Catastrophe survived' Burnett [1971]¹⁷⁴ reads *Ion* along its two plot-lines: the plot of return and the plot of vengeance. We will present some key points from that chapter and we will try to 'reply' to them from our perspective, revising, at the same time, the main principles of the psychoanalytic approach.

What strikes me as important in the early part of the article is the concreteness of characterisation. Shifting the action from Athens to Delphi necessitates a new Creusa "a woman whose *crimes* were no longer simply blind but were touched now with religious error" [Burnett 1971, p. 104, emphasis added]. Ion, on the other hand, is decidedly pure. He lives "the closing moments of his enchanted childhood" (ibid), he retains 'the pastoral purity' of the return-hero and when back in Athens he becomes, according to Apollo's plan "as nearly as possible another Erichthonius". From our point of view we cannot afford such early commitments. We follow the progress of the play in the participants' speech, its twists and turns, and, since the narrative is in the first person singular, we let *them* speak. By letting Ion speak, for instance, we get

¹⁷⁴ I have chosen Burnett's [1971] book as one of the most representative of the classical/classicist approaches to Greek drama. It dates back to the seventies. Perhaps it is 'unfair' to contrast the present reading with an article that was written in another tradition- at a time when literary criticism was not as big as it is today. Yet the article is 'ubiquitous' in almost all subsequent bibliographies. I happened to read it quite early in my research and I must admit that Burnett's criticism, especially the unprecedented attack on Creusa impressed me. So, I suppose that at the end of this reading, when we discuss *beginnings* and *ends* it is justifiable to link my analysis with one of its sources.

I have not chosen another article from within another theory - for instance, Rabinowitz [1993, chapter 7], discusses *Ion* from a feminist perspective. To discuss psychoanalysis along with or in contrast to another theoretical approach to *Ion* involves settling the theoretical issues first of all; it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

an insight into his purity. We learn that it is just the tip of the iceberg, a desperate attempt at purity rather than an established virtue.¹⁷⁵

The *plot of return* is discussed by Burnett along the same lines of characterisation. Ion's monologue/refusal to be persuaded by Xuthus is considered "a charming commentary" on the arrangements of Apollo until his good nature and the prospect of an appealing future get the better of him. It is "the boy's natural gentleness that allows the action to go on, for it makes him obedient to his new-found father..." (ibid). When the misunderstanding between Ion and Creusa is resolved "the divine drama will be done" [Burnett 1971, p. 109]. The complication of Ion's doubt is swiftly dealt with by Athena's intervention who acts in her brother's and her city's interest as she installs Ion on the throne of Athens. Finally, "Apollo's will is done" (p. 111).

Burnett's discussion of the *plot of vengeance* deteriorates into an unprecedented attack on Creusa and a praise of Apollo. At first she appears misguided and deceived by her friends' lies (pp. 111-2). Her monologue does not receive much attention. It is the third falsehood (concerning her son's certain death) that continues a line of falsehoods initiated by the chorus and the 'full of fancy' old servant (p. 113). And though this is supposed to reveal "Creusa's true nature" (p. 113) we are not really told how. Instead, we are assured that though it is not difficult to sympathise with her (I wonder if Burnett 'sympathises with her') "the audience is uncomfortably aware that the lies are proliferating and that they are leading to a deed more terrible than they had supposed, a direct attack not only upon the son but upon the god" (p. 114). Creusa and her friends apparently fail to grasp the subtlety of the situation, because while Xuthus, the "ridiculously happy man", was plotting with his son "to give Creusa as large a share as possible in their new felicity" in the next scene we have to listen "while the foolish old tutor describes that same man as the blackest of villains" (p. 112). All will end well for her however, because her "human deficiency in mercy" is made up by *a merciful god* (p. 116). Let us reserve judgement on the 'merciful' god for the moment.

A certain air of pre-destination arises: some people are pure, some others are not. Ion duplicates the vengeance plot [Burnett 1971, p. 118] and by reciprocating his mother's

¹⁷⁵ This is more in line with adolescence. Compare him to Hippolytos [Barrett 1964], for instance: dedicated defence against sexuality, idealisation of purity, 'women are evil' clichés and so on.

violence "the return hero steps actively into the vengeance plot" (ibid). The fact that he is now just like Creusa but must remain pure creates a certain confusion. Are intentions as serious and punishable as acts? And if their separation counts on Ion's favour where does it leave his mother? Despite recognising the similarity of the common guilt and the intended religious crime, Burnett still defends Ion: "he is *momentarily* able to play the villain's role in a wholly unexpected suppliant tableau" (p. 119, italics added). It seems that culpability somehow depends on duration. She also mentions the general confusion about Ion's purity in other authors: "The transformation is so radical that many critics have rejected it as wholly against nature and therefore bad characterisation, while others have tried to deny Ion's plain intention to seize a suppliant woman" (p. 120). This gives her the opportunity to defend Ion once more by referring to the moment: "Euripides has created a moment, at line 1320, when his *innocent* hero will stand *frozen*, his posture of extreme impiety" (p. 120, emphasis added).

The rest of the article deals with Creusa and Apollo. Creusa's portrait is completed: Euripides' poetic justice allows the suppliant to be the source of "the blasphemous error". Creusa's "rebellion and lack of faith"- expressed in the devouring birds speculation- and "slanders" have "imposed themselves even upon her" [Burnett 1971, p. 121] but she will soon be forced to make 'a gesture of faith" and throw herself at the feet of the god "she has taught herself to hate" (ibid). She is "raised" as few suppliants not by the secular prince but by "a divine device" (p. 122). Though the special nature of her spiritual crime makes her "a rebellious theomachos" she "is still needed as mother of the four Greek tribes". The god saves her and makes a point of "saving Creusa from an open blasphemy" (ibid.) and in the next page Creusa's discovery by the son "should release her from her torment" (p. 123). In the altar scene "Creusa experiences a revelation... in a moment of comprehension she sees that this is the point to which her whole life was leading, that all was necessary as preparation for this" (p. 124). In the end she will tell her true story- because nothing but the truth will do (p. 125). Being thus saved, she "has escaped from her own torturing fictions" (ibid.), can now love the child she always loved and we can "easily" (p. 126) accept this arrangement for these very maternal reasons (" but the strength of her emotion

still has its source in her maternal love. And this is why we can so easily accept her perfect reorientation as the drama ends").

It is not lack of faith that pushes Creusa or anyone to extremes. It is faith that does that. Creusa and Ion have no doubts that Apollo is part of their lives and are trying to deal with that as best as they can. To accuse them of being unable to rise above the circumstances and accept divine will with something reminiscent of Abraham's devotion indicates perhaps that we are transferring our religious ideas back in time. The merciful god and Creusa's revelation are, I believe, tokens of the same influence. Mercy does not appear to have been a particular virtue of those times. Apart from that, there are three gods in the play, not one, and to single out the merciful one at least shows some bias.

Creusa's 'error', both physical and spiritual, is so great that it seems hardly containable. Creusa produces errors and imposes them upon herself, teaches herself to hate. A strange separation of the faculties seems to be lying at the basis of this teach-yourself method in which she is both the teacher and the pupil. Where are the errors produced and where do they arrive? And if the lack of faith is not a clever thing to do, surely in being forced to make a gesture of faith one ought to see one's limits. But is it not force that Creusa has been resisting?

Still, her rescue seems to puzzle Burnett. Creusa is 'raised' and her *crimes*- because they are crimes, nothing less- are answered by a god who 'makes points'. Surely, lacking intellectual refinement, Creusa should be unable to get the message- but somehow she does. But then, is she not saved because she will be needed? Because the four nations need a mother? And is she not 'released' by her son? This tripartite division of the causes creates the effect of providence and sufficiency of evidence for it. Added to this, some moments seem more important than others. While Ion's turning into a potential killer is 'just a moment', Creusa's revelation is *the moment*.

Reserving Apollo's greatness for the very last, Burnett sees that he "has been directing the return action, but has been one of the players too" [Burnett 1971, p. 126] but I cannot really see any other player and director more dedicated than Creusa in *this* play (not outside it). That he is invisible makes no difference (ibid) and when "he *forces* that heightened recognition" (p. 127) via the Pythia, he "*annihilates* Creusa's rebellion" and shows himself "a god of undoubted *power* in human affairs" (ibid).

From all these reasons Burnett concludes that "Apollo's divinity is the essential point of the play" though the vocabulary of her presentation is perhaps a bit too 'forceful' to make it the only 'logical' conclusion.

For the very last time, Apollo may be not too close to mortals but he can stop their actions whenever he likes and anyway, being a god, "does not understand pain and pride and resentment and doubt" [Burnett 1971, p. 128]. Burnett concludes: "This kind of lofty unconsciousness would be repulsive in a mortal character and so those who insist on overlooking Apollo's divinity (even as they criticise it) call him a heartless god... he is not like men; he cannot be accused of their crimes or measured by their justice or called to account by them in any way because flawed nature is not his. It is the one thing he cannot even know, though he can always transcend it and so he does, in the action of the Euripidean *Ion*" (p. 129). By now, of course, the logical aporias are the following: how can Apollo compromise his divine indifference and his so human sexual behaviour? As a modern reader I am not bothered by his detachment (the word 'unconsciousness' is inappropriate) or his sexuality- I will refrain from those blasphemies. I am bothered by the fact that his divinity closes rather than opens the issue. Instead of looking at what sort of relationships the ancient woman and man were trying to establish with the Olympians we see that the major effort goes to establishing the gap between them. The twelve Olympians are long dead and it is common knowledge that they were products of human minds. We examine the minds. If modern literature requires voluntary suspension of disbelief, ancient literature requires voluntary suspension of belief- for obvious reasons. From a 'human' perspective Creusa is not so appalling and her extreme variety of aspects of character is hardly monstrous. I will not defend her or anyone. They are not in need of defence, they speak for themselves and *that* is what we listen to.

I do not think that *Ion* shows "human exertion to be blind and ineffective at best" or that "divine pity and purpose...turn disaster into bliss" or that "the noble characters as ineffective as the base" [Burnett 1971, p. 14]. If nobility cannot guarantee better standards perhaps it is time to stop referring to it as the standard. Gods do not interfere but after the circumstances for their interference have been created, circumstances that in other cases have led to death and non-interference where, again, gods' greatness has been affirmed.

I do not think that Xuthus is ridiculous when he tries to get hold of his only chance to establish himself as a father, nor is the old servant who seizes the only opportunity to shake off the bad name of slavery. We do not need 'divine' inspiration to see how man turns against man when the same territory is disputed and we cannot dismiss the repetitions of the same story as mere fabrication or easily adaptable lies. There are repetitions, reversals, copy-cat similarities, evocative resemblances, unexpressed intentions and concealed truths. There is response from a subject to another subject's demand, to what the other asks and to what he seems to be asking between the lines. There is anticipation and retrogression. Everyone tries to come to terms with the unseen, but, to be sure, it is not Apollo. It is what falls between the lines in the message that gets across. Thus, the pure and the impure try equally hard to adapt to the *désir de l'Autre*, and in doing so to adapt to the *désir de l'autre* (small a, for the fellow human being) as well. If there is a word, a problem, repeated it is not divinity but paternity. If there is an attitude consistently replicated it is the attitude to paternity¹⁷⁶ and to the name of the Father. The problem of the Name of the Father, which as we know symbolises the entry to the Symbolic and its separation from the Imaginary, is articulated in a variety of ways. It makes the most of polarities: seeing and blindness, nothing and the obvious, truth and un-truth, appearance and reality, appearance and disappearance and so on. When it is missing the world seems chaotic without it. To project any question related to the play beyond the play goes against its principles. And if we start attributing blames and responsibilities we reverse its action and we fall victim to exactly the same principles that created rivalry within it. When Apollo's superiority is based on denigrating Creusa we are doing nothing more than duplicating the Imaginary, the 'it's always the other's fault', the one belief that is surely refuted in this play. In a quarrel between two, the imaginary perspective wants only one of them to be right. Reality, and indeed psychological reality, is far subtler than that. Reaching an understanding, by the socio-cultural standards of the time, is far more important than glorifying god.

¹⁷⁶ Apollo cannot answer the issue of paternity: first of all - let's save his honour - he is not asked about it. Second, he leaves his replica, the un-intentional father Xuthus to deal with it.

The play guides and challenges us: if you see where blindness and insight lead without or before falling victim to the fascination of appeals, seductions or even the ossified standards that are currently under review, you might escape the emotional involvement. Emotional replies to the play, imaginary responses that insist on who is right and who is wrong, are acceptable so long as they respect the symbolic convention of being named and acknowledged for what they are. On another level, the play can be considered as an elaborate intellectual exercise that dictates its own *problems* and provides the leads to its answers. All it takes is to divide attention equally among all its parts and to defer judgement, especially at the point where emotion, pity or horror or some other feeling are bound to affect it.

In this thesis I have used the Imaginary and the Symbolic along the lines of *alienation* and *the paternal metaphor*. The variety of terms used can be grouped under these two headings. I follow the unravelling of speech in the play along the lines of its similarity to the unravelling of the analytic experience. The analytic experience involves the dissolution of imaginary identifications, the recognition and articulation of the real problem, the interpretation of the problem and its fastening to a representation of the Oedipus complex/paternal metaphor.

In following the progress of the play we are trying to find what is inside the play and not only at the end of it. We discover truth, the truth of the speaking subject. All characters, all subjects, embark on the exploration of their own identity, aided by the Symbolic and haunted by the Imaginary without really knowing what they are after and what they will find in the end.

Focusing on Ion and Creusa, the play can be compared with the process of analysis. For Lacan, analysis *describes* concentric circles around the core of the problem. It consists of approximations of the truth of the subject. It orbits the circumference of the circles, getting closer and closer to the core. Sometimes the sensitive centre is hit accidentally. This causes maximum resistance in the subject.¹⁷⁷ Creusa and Ion meet accidentally and, reaching each other's truth too early too directly, they retreat in dismay. During the day they will approximate their truth again and again.

¹⁷⁷ See [Lacan:Miller 1975] for the schema and description.

As a sequence of scenes the play exhibits shifts of interest from scene to scene, fragmentation and in-con-sequence. Great changes occur and the subjects -all of them but Ion and Creusa in particular- *cut through* the rapid changes by repeating their story, trying to hold onto what they know and what represents their stability but at the same time trying to adapt. They embark on an investigation of their subjectivity. We follow it. Contrary to what has been suggested by Burnett [1971] I do not think that the essence of the play is Apollo's divinity. Nor do I consider the play as a return to religious feeling. From the psychoanalytic perspective I would say that the play is primarily a beautiful account of human nature- the only nature I can accept as a modern reader. From our point of view errors do not expose the stupidity of mankind and the divinity of the gods. In following Lacan, in undermining consciousness and the ego, we create the opportunity to focus on desire. We are *keyed* to desire, not to misleading certainties. The demolition of the misleading certainties does not undermine the subject.

We have examined the play in accordance with the rules of analysis and language on two axes: on the horizontal, we examined the unfolding of the signifier-plot as a sequence of discourses. On the vertical axis we looked at the speech of particular subjects (Ion and Creusa) and the personal history they provided in these accounts. We used psychoanalytic terms to describe and locate our findings in the registers of the Imaginary and the Symbolic.

We started with a psychoanalytic reading of Ion's self-presentation, the opening monologue of the first scene. We discovered that his purity was only a symptom, a defence against the return of the repressed, his unresolved and ambivalent relation to Apollo. We then examined Ion and Creusa's first meeting, the deceptive solidarity of the first few moments which was based on the recognition of similarities of lack and ignorance. We then saw the return of the repressed in practice once again, as Ion and Creusa's sympathy for each other collapsed through the mention of Apollo's sexuality. We brought into focus Ion and Creusa's *relation* to Apollo, which is very subjective from the beginning. It is important to stress that both Ion and Creusa foreground their subjective and special relation to Apollo. Thus, he is not only the one who has answers because of his divinity but the one who owes such answers because he is a father. Apollo *knows* by definition and it remains to be seen what sort of knowledge

one expects him to have and be willing to impart. Even if Apollo can answer any question, one must know what one is looking for. The answer you receive depends on how you formulate your question, but ultimately and primarily on finding your voice and learning to ask in the first place.

Now that we have reached the end of our research we can ask: *what is it all about?* in the first scene. Knowledge, *forbidden knowledge*, which for psychoanalysis is sexual and within the subject. Learning to speak, however, expressing oneself, and gradually articulating the truth is not easy. Where do I start? asks the ignorant. In medias res, start anywhere you like, it makes no difference. Where shall I look? In the entire world, the Pythia replies. What shall I find? You will know when it finds you.

Concerning the truth of the subject Creusa and Ion manage to start from the most difficult and most productive point: from what does not work. The early attempt to go to Apollo 'on someone else's behalf' exposes the shortcomings of pretending to have assumed the impersonality of an ambassador or, in terms of their precious silence and purity, of pretending that nothing is wrong. This sort of personal dishonesty rather than scheming and lying interests us here, the consequences of avoiding the problem and indeed of what creates the *peripeteia* of the play.

I said earlier that the progress of the play resembles the analytic process of circling the core of truth and occasionally going straight to it. Creusa and Ion's first meeting is such a straight-to-the-core moment and of course both of them are unprepared for the consequences. The reaction is typical: refusal to face the truth, resulting in *méconnaissance* (misrecognition) and rivalry. Ion assumes that Apollo needs to be told and protected and takes it upon himself to tell and protect him. Creusa assumes that Ion speaks on behalf of Apollo and is utterly dismayed. What is more revealing, however, is the fact that both subjects 'speak the truth' without even knowing it. Ion and Creusa play mother to each other, that is, they *represent the father in their speech* and in doing so they speak the truth of their own experience. Mother-Creusa says: uncontrollable sexuality, violence. Mother-Ion says: I forbid you to speak. Sexuality and prohibition (death threat and castration) come together and are inflicted on one another with exemplary precision. Psychoanalysis would have used the term 'bad encounter' for such a traumatic meeting. I would say that the first meeting is an 'unlucky encounter' because Ion and Creusa are so much like each other. What Creusa

says makes perfect sense to Ion and vice versa because what comes from outside, from the other's speech, falls into place with what remains repressed in the inside. No sooner have they met than Creusa and Ion meet in an imaginary locus beyond the mantic oracle. They have come across what blocks the access to Apollo from within. Still, they are unable to recognise it. They cannot begin to recognise it until their problem is expressed in the Symbolic, in what is at stake in terms of social position, heritage, progeny etc. Thus the false start is repressed. The first meeting only *updates* an older problem of confrontation with the Father which is always avoided and postponed. The same happens here. The new confrontation with Apollo is postponed. In its place, the imaginary enmity against the other emerges. The other, the fellow human being, is the reminder of the shocking encounter. But the deception does not lie there. Ion and Creusa have used the Name of the Father upon each other with such conviction that they have created the impression of being rightful users of this name. They have deceived each other but, without knowing it, they share the same aporia (concerning the Father). So they recognise the knowledge they are deprived of in the other, in anyone who simply *appears to* possess it.

The updating of the problem, its convincing representation in discourse is our starting point. We proceed from their truth: their misunderstandings and the Father.

In the beginning we have a dis-location of the said and the unsaid, the seen and the unseen, of the expression that does not quite catch its own meaning, an alienation in language. In Scenes Two and Three the specific issues raised in One together with the embarrassment of the news and the hasty suspension of the discourse will be *meaningfully* incorporated into the new developments. I say *meaningfully* because the two parties, Xuthus and Ion, Creusa and her friends, will manage to make sense of the day's events and the oracle. Making sense is arriving at a *non-contradictory* conclusion. Arriving at a non-contradictory conclusion involves turning a blind eye to apparent inconsistencies, mistaking speculations for certainties, upgrading plausible hypotheses to solid truths and, most importantly, anticipating the other party's hostility and responding to it in advance. The semantic proximity of seeing and knowing will, from Scene Two onwards, produce an explosion of the desire to know and see in literal and metaphorical terms. Aided by the oracle and the appearance of

Ion-the-child that must remain obscure and by the appetite for knowledge generated by ignorance, a game of *appearances and deceptions* flourishes. The Symbolic will provide the basis for the claim to *lawful right*. The Imaginary will project *the wrong* onto the other side. The *intellect*, the field of noetic possibilities, vast and 'unprotected', is appropriated and powered by the simple imaginary opposition: include/exclude. The ostrich-ism of the situation, developed into hatred and anticipating the other's move, escapes the notice of the two camps. Inevitably, the general claims of knowledge, knowing in advance, shedding ignorance and gaining certainty, take shape 'with the other in mind'.

It is only later, with Creusa and Ion's second meeting that the shortcomings of the imaginary scenaria of Scenes Two and Three come to light on equal terms. What does not work and has not been working is finally surfacing with the urgency of a death threat, that is, as an issue to be addressed without further delay. The altar scene opens the road to truth but this does not permit us to dismiss the previous two scenes as errors or useless scheming. On the contrary, by examining the content of Scenes Two and Three we gain an understanding of the Imaginary and the Symbolic in relation to Desire. In psychoanalysis there are *times for understanding* (temps pour comprendre) and *moments of concluding* (moments de conclure).¹⁷⁸ The latter cannot be conceived without the former. If nothing else, the play shows, right from the beginning, that unexplained 'truths' are not very well received.

In order not to diminish their importance, I do not label Ion's attachment to Xuthus or Creusa's attachment to the old servant as 'cursory identifications' from the beginning, although I have used the term discussing Ion's identifications in Chapter Three. What I want to emphasise is that Scenes Two and Three make perfect sense if we consider them as two isolated scenaria, barring our knowledge of who is who. Adopting this 'blind' point of view allows us to go through the mechanisms of the Imaginary and the influence of the Symbolic with an awareness that it is pre-conceived ideas and

¹⁷⁸In Wilden [1968, pp. 18-19]. *Times for understanding*: examining imaginary identifications, assuming one's own personal history, reaching the error or contradiction concerning past events; *moment of concluding*: deciding what meaning to confer upon them (once they have been articulated and recognised).

certainties that create misunderstandings. This is exactly what we find in the two scenes.

From the point of view of psychoanalysis we explore the properties of the Imaginary, the domain of the ego and narcissism. We trace the 'genesis' of the ego in the Mirror Stage, in the alienating identification with the form of the other. We follow Lacan's argument according to which, despite the jubilation felt by the infant at the approaching mastery of its body, the initial identification structures the subject as rival to himself. This prepares the ground for another rivalry, the identification with the father. We explain the restrictive and fixed character of the ego and the notions of alienation and aggressivity in relation to the *subject of the unconscious* and what is left outside the strict 'orthopaedic' ego. We situate jubilation and aggressivity at opposite ends: at the anticipation of mastery and at the ego under attack. Then we turn to a visual representation of the Imaginary, Lacan's optical schema. With the arrangement of mirrors we account for the development of sexuality beyond its formative stages. Sexuality is directed towards (external) objects by recognising its own narcissism in them and investing them with libido. Bringing in the three different types of identifications suggested by Freud and modified by Lacan, we 'open up' the Imaginary to human behaviour in general, not just sexuality. Our final reference, to the reality of the psychoanalytic experience, allows us to highlight the significance of the 'building up' as well as the 'demolition' of the imaginary identifications.

Concerning Scenes Two and Three we apply the main idea of the optical schema to the content of the scenes. We consider then an arrangement of mirrors. Not only can Xuthus see himself (his ideal) in Ion and vice versa, not only can Creusa see her ideal coming back to her from the old man and the chorus, but the two parties can reflect each other via the chorus, the plain glass that reflects death, what they would have received (imaginary) either way.

The exhaustion of the Imaginary, the peeling off of its layers in analysis, is in our case realised in the clash between Creusa and Ion. The clash, the second meeting, is not arranged by any deity but is naturally *arrived at* as a consequence of the misunderstanding and the need for clarification necessary in order for the subject(s) to

face up to the contradictions produced in speech, or, in our case, to the paradox of the altar scene.

Concerning human behaviour from a psychoanalytic point of view we can see nothing ridiculous in Xuthus and the old man. We see two desperate individuals who foreground the importance of parenthood and identity in the most intense way. Their fascination with Ion and Creusa respectively and the eagerness with which they play the role of the father they would like to be, is a perfect example of how desire is captured by form (the form of the child). On the other hand, the desperation of the king and the old man and their commitment to their imaginary children leaves Ion and Creusa almost clean, suspiciously clean, of the responsibility of the error. This is a misconception to which we must not surrender. By stressing the mirror properties of the Imaginary, we eliminate the question of responsibilities from our discussion, in the sense that we refuse to 'blame' the one party more than the other. Likewise, we do not need stupidity, badness, falsehood or any other such notion to account for their behaviour. We are not interested in describing *them* but in reaching an understanding of the play.

As such, identification with the father is mocked in Scenes Two and Three but the insights are valuable. The world of *appearances* and *deceptions* and *stealth* has its roots inside 'me': in order to deceive I must be deceived. What catches Ion and Creusa's desire in Xuthus and the old man? The altruism and the utter resignation of the father who (appears to) want nothing but what is best for the child. Now that we have studied the entire play and have discussed Creusa and Ion's special relation to their real fathers we are in a position to appreciate the impact of Scenes Two and Three. As earthly approachable father Xuthus and the old man revive the idea of the caring father, the almost complete opposite of what Ion and Creusa have expressed. Can there be an image more persuasive than the father/king abandoning himself into the arms the son/slave or the old man who has been over-using the word 'my daughter' now declaring he has been rejuvenated in order to do his duty? Such a happy encounter can only produce jubilation.

But jubilation goes with aggression as certainly as the gift of love is to be reciprocated and returned and not just acknowledged¹⁷⁹. *I would die for you, or conceal the truth for you, or claim you to be mine*, are proposals that need to be met on the same level. We do not really expect Ion and Creusa to step out of the circle of fascinations and address the circumstances with the cool detachment of a disinterested onlooker- they have already failed once. It is not lack of maturity that produces the inability to respond in such a way. It is the play of form and desire that revives their narcissism and refuses to forgo its satisfaction¹⁸⁰ unless it has to. To push the issue any further, to say that they should not have fallen for it is like blaming someone for falling in love. It leads to nonsense.

But why aggression? We have seen that the Imaginary is the field of perfect knowledge minus the error. It has its own logic: love your friend and hate your enemy. It works the other way too: the one I love is my friend, the one I hate is my enemy. And also: if I hate him or her s/he is my enemy, if I love him or her s/he is my friend.¹⁸¹ This simple logic is applied when 'something beyond the eyes' does not seem to work in the perfect world of Xuthus or in the other party's perfect plan. It does not come from the other side any more than it comes from the inside: the hide and seek that evades the eyes, the secrecy of a lifetime, the deceptive dissimulation of loss and pain, the compulsive alertness to death, pollution, dirt, shame all return with the jubilant ease of the recognition of the father and the child. Because Xuthus and the old man's vocabulary reverberate with personal connotations for Ion and Creusa it produces the anxiety and aggressivity characteristic of the ego under attack. Without knowing it, responding just to the imaginary requirements of the role they have just assumed, Xuthus and the servant will impose their will upon their 'children', inflicting contradictory demands and evoking ambivalent reactions. They are urging Ion and Creusa to behave like them, to assert their right, to be a real man or woman, to ignore

¹⁷⁹ I refer to the difference between symbolic recognition of desire and imaginary reciprocation, giving back the equal.

¹⁸⁰ In 'On Narcissism' [1914] Freud suggests that the ego refuses to forgo familiar forms of satisfactions. Narcissism is essentially the return to familiar forms of satisfaction.

¹⁸¹ The idea is based on the observation of the properties of the Imaginary in Chapter Two and on Lacan's description of the imaginary emotional transitivity in Lacan. [1948, p. 19]

while being ignored, to hit instead of being hit, but at the same time to lie low and wait as usual.

For the second time the cause of aggressivity is missed. It does not come from the other but from one's own camp. For the second time Ion and Creusa will fail to recognise (*méconnaissance*) the return of the repressed and will deflect/anticipate it from outside. The other/rival will be the perfect victim. The new-found friend/father, the real cause of anxiety, will not be hated. Further *alienation* of the subject's truth is taking place under the pressure of and the secrecy of the 'present circumstances'.

It is when we return to Creusa and Ion's language in the monologues that we enter into the *causes* of aggression. We trust the properties of language to reveal them in the retroactive effect of signification that always returns to the key point (quilting point) of the Other (unconscious) and seeks to rectify its relationship with the Other (Mother and Father). We will focus on that aspect in this part of our discussion.

Creusa and Ion's response to the situation are two monologues which are characterised by confusion and intensity. They are, nevertheless, successful enough in articulating *fear*. We have examined Ion's monologue (l. 585-647) only very briefly. But his anxiety about the return to Athens with Xuthus foregrounds the problems of the present solution and the inadequacies of the Imaginary. Creusa voices similar concerns in her monologue. Ion highlights the practical difficulties of returning to Athens and being accepted as an equal. Creusa highlights the difficulties of living secretly. Ion imagines a life of failure and isolation on the margins of society, Creusa declares she has lived just that. Ion seeks the mark of origin-ality that will allow him to enter Athens as equal, Creusa raises the issue of originality with the theme of deceptive appearances and the question of who authenticates truth and who exposes the impostors. In both cases, it is so long as Ion and Creusa want to see themselves inside society and do not (voluntarily) exclude themselves that these issues arise. And it is not just participation but *integration* that they seek. To live *lathra* is, in essence, to live outside society.

The tragic moment, I think, in this play is the encounter of the Imaginary and the Symbolic at the personal level, even before the second meeting at the altar. What prepares the ground for that final encounter, the sharpening of the questions and the

acceptance of the settlement is born in the expression of fear which in all cases takes the form of *failure* and the return of narcissism. With Creusa's monologue, we come closer to the personal aspect of truth and to what psychoanalysis describes as the imaginary integration of one's history by the subject. Creusa does not speak a single lie in her monologue. She does not speak a single lie in the entire play and we might even say that no one does. From a psychoanalytic point of view every utterance is an attempt to say something that is only true or false by the standards of formal logic, which is irrelevant to our case.

On the issues of 'living *lathra*', 'the father' and 'Law', the entire Symbolic seeks to separate itself from the Imaginary. These are the very issues that seem to defy black and white monolithic attitudes, of instance, *kill your enemies and love your friends*, and to advance more sophisticated questions, for instance, how to you tell a friend from an enemy in the first place? What I see as important in the issues raised in Scenes Two and Three and in Creusa's monologue -which is part of the latter- is a deeper philosophical or ontological issue concerning discerning abilities and being able to acquire a stance and maintain it without having to refer to the ossified law that seems to 'betray' the interests of the subject anyway due to its incapacity to address these issues. From this point of view we see the mis-accomodation of the individual to the all-encompassing Symbolic. The Symbolic may be adequately organised but somehow Ion and Creusa have managed to locate its black holes and fall into them. Again, I must stress that it is only from the personal perspective that the anxiety and fear may arise. Individual questionings of the Law such as these draw the entire system to the subject rather than the subject to the system, and this is exactly the point of interest in psychoanalysis. If this relationship is not improved or resolved the subject will have a mechanistic position in society and will fall victim to what we have already highlighted: cursory identifications. *Lathra* is not integration, it is a sham. Ion and Creusa know very well what it involves. And in trying to say so, they see themselves swallowed up by an indifferent society that neither profits nor loses from their disappearance. Again, according to the modes of the Imaginary the question can be eternally posed, eternally generating its own fear, eternally failing to ensure a reply, unless the subject manages to separate itself from the viscous circle of failures and 'exiles'.

What Ion and Creusa seem to grasp and articulate with the fear of isolation and death is the *scapegoating* by which both of them see themselves excluded from society. This is the issue that the mandate poses as 'impossible to assume'. It is a composite expression consisting of the fundamental ignorance of the desire of the Other (Father), the assumption that the Other's desire is synonymous with transgression and violence, the subject's reluctance and failure to comply with this desire and the symbolic exclusion of the other (fellow human being) who, by being excluded or dying, takes away all badness and leaves 'me' pure and innocent and a champion of the (F)Other's cause¹⁸². If Creusa kills Ion, or, if Ion kills Creusa they will appear to have done the Other's will by serving his cause, his country or his name, but in reality they will have inflicted on the other their own worst fear and they will have evaded the issue that concerns themselves one more time.

This becomes obvious when we consider by what standards Ion and Creusa 'reach' this mess and by what standards they have lived their lives and who is it that they have imitated all their lives. In all cases the answer is one: the impossible to imitate Father, the larger than life Erechtheus and Apollo. The issue of transition into the human world, for Ion and Creusa alike, exposes the real problem, a subject trapped between heaven and earth, and, from a slightly different perspective, a subject trapped in the myth of omnipotence and excess of regulation by the standards of which it fails miserably. At this point the figure of Apollo is deceptive. It is precisely the divinity that they want to avoid and separate themselves from; it is this high standard that petrifies them in their attempt to be something *they should have been* for the Other, something more than they are. Again, we return to the issue of narcissism and to the beginning: where does one start from? Where does one start from when one has reached the point of repeating in different forms the personal problem, reflecting it onto society and receiving it back, reflecting it onto gods and receiving it back.

In the end, the second meeting at the altar cuts short the excessive intentions and gives way to the confrontation that is not an intention but reality. The survival of Creusa and Ion in the hands of each other depends largely on the eternal *failure* to reach *the* mark of excellence set too high: to die, to commit themselves to something they do not

¹⁸² See Žižek [1989, pp. 114-117], for a similar position to our social scapegoating.

know. If Creusa and Ion should thank someone or something for their survival it is only their traumatised narcissism that generates hesitation, low self-esteem, inability to finish a task. It is their *symptom* that saves their life. It ties Ion's hands and refuses to push the sword. It freezes Creusa and holds her back from falling onto it.

The moment illustrates and summarises the alienated meaning of a lifetime. Indeed we are talking about a dead-end here: eternal repetition, eternally living de-centred lives in which only the other/ Other is responsible and the subject is *forced* to participate, for good or for worse. In Scene Two Ion gets what he wants, Athenian parents. Creusa gets what she wants, a son, but in both cases the irony of 'isn't that you wanted?' (to which the only answer is 'No') returns to them only *the form* of their desire, empty, alienated, divested from all meaning.

The same happens with their imminent sacrifice in the altar scene. Having lost the social and religious overtones, having become absolutely human, the confrontation poses a single question: will you die, will you take yourself out of the picture voluntarily? The answer is 'No'. By refusing to do the other's bidding, they also refuse to comply with the (imagined) Other's desire because it does not make sense. Ion and Creusa have been exposed to this nonsense all their lives and have been trying either to express or remove it from sight. In the altar scene the return of the repressed catches up with them: the desire to live, which does not need any justification I suppose, meets the obligation to die. The contradiction is faced: how am I doing Your will if I die? and, in Creusa's case, how do I serve Your city by clearing myself out of my rival's way? What good is it to me? The eternal aporia has fallen into place.

Towards perspective

The motionlessness of the altar scene represents the time for concluding, in which Ion's hesitation to kill Creusa and die (in every sense but the physical one) is postponed. The subject is constantly suspended in the time of the Other, says Lacan in the commentary on Hamlet [1977, p. 17]. He creates the circumstances for being the phallus of the Other and fails miserably. If it were so in our case, Ion and Creusa would have fallen by each other's hand, but it is not, and in reality their hesitation

forces the Other's hand for the first and the last time. The meaninglessness of the Other's desire shines through. The final moment of the psychoanalytic process comes, according to Žižek, "precisely when he gets rid of this question- that is, when he accepts his being as *non-justified by the big Other*" [Žižek 1989, p. 113]. Ion and Creusa only go that far for a single moment. It might be bearable for the modern subject to live in the relative destitution of no-mandate but we must accept that it was unthinkable in ancient society. Two consecutive interventions on the precise issue confirm this point. I am bringing in the 'modern subject' because I would like to draw attention to the two stages of the adventure, first the assumption of an alienating mandate and then its renunciation. I found a similar point in Žižek in a comment concerning 'modern subjectivity' and I bring it into our discussion in order to update Athena's intervention: "what Lacan renders visible is a radical, redoubled self-referring renunciation by means of which the dimension of subjectivity emerges. The first level is the symbolic pact: the subject identifies the kernel of his being with the symbolic feature to which he is prepared to subordinate his entire life, for which he is prepared to sacrifice everything- in short, the alienation in the symbolic mandate. The second level consists in sacrificing this sacrifice itself: in a most radical sense, we 'break the word', we renounce the symbolic alliance which defines the very kernel of our being- the abyss, the void in which we find ourselves thereby, is what we call 'modern age subjectivity'" [Žižek 1992, p. 167].

It seems to me that 'ancient subjectivity' poses different requirements from within the very questions it asks and actually carries the issue of sacrifice and sacrifice of sacrifice one step beyond. It seeks reconciliation with the Other. It cannot bear the void. Thus, it creates *Athenas* and *good will* in the place of bad faith (the narcissistic *mauvais foi*).¹⁸³ If a play is a cultural product that reflects the contemporary social issues filtered through the personal perspective of an individual author and refracted through the characters of the first person drama we should be almost certain that we are receiving the echoes from the very core of society, from the *dialectic* itself that constitutes society and language that never ceases to update its definition and to negotiate its meaning. *Athens is the city of words* [Goldhill 1986, p. 57] and keeps

¹⁸³ See Wilden [1968, p. 291].

itself alive so long as it does not settle its aporias by a meaningless exhibition of power.

In *Ion* the final part of the drama is played by the redefinition of the mandate. *Thou shall be... a man and a woman...father or mother...* does not settle the issues of masculinity or femininity and does not provide placebo-answers. It rather sketches *directions* that might not be all that easy to follow but which are compatible with the contemporary definitions of society and inclusion into society. But in doing so within the constraints and according to the demands of the *specific* play it exposes the illusory character of the settlement itself¹⁸⁴. The question of 'having the phallus' or 'being the phallus', says Lacan, finally settles by the intervention of a '*to seem*' that replaces the 'to have', masks its lack and creates the effect of the opposite sexes [Lacan 1958, p. 289]. In our case the 'to seem' of sexuality is supported by and translates into a generalised game of appearances and deceptions. No one is spared—we should know that by now.

It is not, however, the dis-located difference of appearances and reality. What Athena brings is *perspective*. Indeed the world does not change: it has remained the same old world of lies and deceptions and appearances but now contains *the knowledge* that allows ignorance to fall into place. Athena gives two signifiers: 'father' and 'blindness' so long as Ion and Creusa have asked for *them* in particular. She separates *Truth* from *Knowledge*, to the extent that this knowledge is associated with *méconnaissance*¹⁸⁵ when she (and the Pythia before her) *recognises* the subjects' desire. The current solution is not an absolute and continuous disillusionment, which might have been as difficult to bear as the fragmentation of the world, but a brilliant reintroduction of *the*

¹⁸⁴ We could say that from within the play Creusa and Ion are 'comments' on society. From within society they are 'ordinary people'.

¹⁸⁵ Wilden [1968, p. 166] illustrates the point: "Who or what am I? The subject, like Oedipus, always knows the answer, but the distinction between Knowledge (*savoir*) and truth repeatedly emphasised by Lacan points up the function of *méconnaissance* and *reconnaissance* in human life. Truth for the subject is not knowledge but recognition. Mental illness on the other hand is precisely the refusal to recognise that truth; the mechanisms of negation, disavowal, rejection, isolation, and so forth flow from it. But a certain *méconnaissance* - which we might call sublimation - is essential to health".

law of the father as Loxias, as play of the signifier, metonymy and metaphor, deception of the eye and truth mixed with appearances.

The new perspective symbolises the separation of the geometrical symmetries of the Imaginary from the poetic flux of the Symbolic. It joins two truths: the *sin* of the father and the *sign* of the father. The reply to the desire for this perspective voiced by Creusa's desperate attempt to gain over-view and see from afar, is answered with a trick of the eye with which one manages to be and not to be like the father.¹⁸⁶ This encapsulates the entire history of the subject as the history of deception, *lathra*, avoiding the Other's eye takes on a different meaning. Creusa discovers that her father, too, was subject to castration (the symbolic blindness) and in some ways she has been closer to his signifier than she ever thought. Ion discovers the meaning and perhaps the direction of the future in the epithet (adjective of quality) of the father: Loxias, double-sighted and by extension many other things: cross-eyed, far-sighted, and double-edged (like his 'tongue' and his long forgotten weapons). The essential point is that the new perspective encourages the renunciation of the neurotic pureism that has been associated with the fruitless confrontation and the repetition of *aporia*.

The new beginning is the end of the drama, *an end not the end*. It is brought upon by the laws of language which are certainly older than cut and dry advice to new citizens. One might say that by reliving the Oedipus complex they just rediscover the wheel—nothing new in it. But it is absolutely necessary that the wheel be rediscovered by every human being; otherwise it remains a luminous circle in the sky, the fiery sun-god who blinds and scorches instead of giving life.

Another circle closes: in the end the truth foretold joins the truth of the subject. Hermes' prediction does not quite capture the events. The divine truth undergoes the vicissitudes of the play and in the end re-appears mixed with deceptive appearances. Shall we question Hermes' truthfulness like Ion who questioned the truth of Apollo? We do not need to. The end is clear: believe the liar because he tells the truth. Hermes

¹⁸⁶ A reminder: for the paternal super-ego Freud [1923, p. 374] commends: "Its relation to the ego is not exhausted by the precept: 'You ought to be like this (like your father)'. It also comprises the prohibition: 'You may not be like this (like your father)' - that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative'.

is the god of *metaphor*, he embodies "metaphor's movement from one place to another, alien place, and the enrichment and risk that movement entails" [Padel 1992, p. 11]. Our play *is* movement, the movement of desire.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

entries with * are cited in the text

- Arthur, Marilyn B (1973) "Early Greece: The Origins of the Western Attitude toward Women" in *Arethusa*, Vol 6 (1973), pp. 7-58.
- Bain, David (1979) "Euripides, Ion 1261-81" in *Classical Quarterly*, Vol 29 (1979), pp. 263-267.
- Bar, Eugen (1971) "The Language of the Unconscious According to Jacques Lacan" in *Semiotica*, Vol 3(3), pp. 241-268.
- ***Barrett, W S (1964)** (Ed) *Euripides Hippolytos*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Benveniste, Emile (1971) *Problems in General Linguistics*. University of Miami Press.
- ***Benvenuto, Bice and Kennedy, Roger (1986)** *The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction*. Free Association Books, London.
- ***Bersani, Leo (1986)** *The Freudian Body. Psychoanalysis and Art*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- ***Boothby, Richard (1991)** *Death and Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. Routledge, New York.
- Borch-Jacobsen, Mikkell (1988) *The Freudian Subject*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Bowie, Malcolm (1987) *Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as Fiction*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- *—— (1991) *Lacan*. Fontana Press, London.
- ***Bremond, C (1980)** "The Logic of Narrative Possibilities" in *New Literary History*, 1980.
- ***Burnett, Anne Pippin (1962)** "Human Resistance and Divine Persuasion in Euripides' Ion" in *Classical Philology*, Vol 57 (1962), pp. 89-103.
- *—— (1971) *Catastrophe Survived: Euripides' Plays of Mixed Reversal*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- ***Campbell, Joseph (1956)** *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Meridian Books, New York.
- Collard, C (1975) "Formal Debates in Euripides' Drama" in *Greece and Rome*, Vol 22, pp. 58-71.
- Conacher, D J (1959) "The Paradox of Euripides' Ion" in *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol 90 (1959), pp. 20-39.

- *—— (1967) "The Ion: Technical Virtuosity" in Conacher, D J *Euripidean Drama: Myth, Theme and Structure*. Oxford University Press, London, 1967, pp. 267-285.
- ***De Grummond, W W (1983)** "Heracles' Entrance: An Illustration of Euripidean Method" in *Eranos*, Vol 81 (1983), pp. 83-90.
- Dodds E R (1951) *The Greeks and the Irrational*. University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1959.
- Dowden, Ken (1992) *The Uses of Greek Mythology*. Approaching the Ancient World Series, Routledge, London.
- Ehrenzweig, Anton (1967) *The Hidden Order of Art: A Study in the Psychoanalysis of Artistic Imagination*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.
- Eisner, Robert (1979) "Euripides' Use of Myth" in *Arethusa*, Vol 12 (1979), pp. 153-174.
- Eliade, Mircea (1965) *The Myth of Eternal Return*. Pantheon Books, Princeton.
- ***Ellmann, Maud (1994)** (Ed) *Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism*. Longman, New York.
- Evans, Dylan (1996) *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychology*. Routledge.
- ***Ferguson, John (1969)** "Tetralogies, Divine Paternity, and the Plays of 414" in *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol 100 (1969), pp. 109-117.
- ***Foley, Helen (1985)** *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides*. Ithaca.
- Forrester, John (1980) *Language and the Origins of Analysis*. Macmillan, London.
- *—— (1990) *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Derrida*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Fowler, Murray (1943) "The Myth of Ἄϊός-εὐιείρῳ" in *Classical Philology*, Vol 38 (January 1943), pp. 28-32.
- Freud, Anna (1937) *Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*. Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, London.
- ***Freud, Sigmund (1900)** *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Edited by Angela Richards, Penguin Books 1991.
- *—— (1905) "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" *On Sexuality. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 33-169.
- *—— (1906) "My Views on the Part Played by Sexuality in the Aetiology of the Neurosis" in *On Psychopathology: Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1993, pp. 67-81.
- (1907) "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices" in *The Origins of Religion: Totem and Taboo, Moses and Monotheism and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1990, pp. 27-41.
- (1909) "Family Romances" in *On Sexuality. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 221-225.

- (1912) “Types of Onset of Neurosis” in *On Psychopathology: Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1993, pp. 115-127.
- *—— (1913) “Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics” in *The Origins of Religion: Totem and Taboo, Moses and Monotheism and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1990, pp. 27-41.
- *—— (1914) “On Narcissism: An Introduction” in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 59-97.
- *—— (1915) “Instincts and their Vicissitudes” in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 105-138.
- *—— (1915b) “Repression” in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 139-158.
- *—— (1915c) “The Unconscious” in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 159-222.
- *—— (1917) “Mourning and Melancholia” in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 245-268.
- *—— (1919) “A Child is being Beaten (A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions)” in *On Psychopathology: Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1993, pp. 159-193.
- *—— (1919b) “The ‘Uncanny’” in *Art and Literature: Jensen’s ‘Gradiva’, Leonardo Da Vinci and Other Works*, Pelican Books 1985, pp. 335-376.
- *—— (1920) “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 269-338.
- *—— (1921) “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego” in *Civilization, Society and Religion: Group Psychology, Civilization and its Discontents and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 91-178.
- *—— (1923) “The Ego and the Id” in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 341-407.
- *—— (1923b) “The Infantile Genital Organisation (An Interpolation into the Theory of Sexuality)” in *On Sexuality. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 303-312.
- *—— (1924) “The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex” in *On Sexuality. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 315-322.
- *—— (1925) “Negation” in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 435-442.

- *—— (1926) "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety" in *On Psychopathology: Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1993, pp. 227-333.
- *—— (1931) "Female Sexuality" in *On Sexuality. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 371-392.
- *—— (1933) "Lecture 29: Revision of the Theory of Dreams" in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 35-59.
- *—— (1933b) "Lecture 31: The Dissection of the Psychical Personality" in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 88-112.
- *—— (1933c) "Lecture 33: Femininity" in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 145-169.
- (1940) "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence" in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books 1991, pp. 457-464.
- (1942) "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage" in *Art and Literature: Jensen's 'Gradiva', Leonardo Da Vinci and Other Works*, Pelican Books 1985, pp. 119-127.
- Gillan, Garth (1982) *From Sign to Symbol*. Harvester Press, Brighton.
- Girard, Rene (1972) *Violence and the Sacred*. Translated by Patrick Gregory, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1977.
- *Goldhill, Simon (1984) "Exegesis: Oedipus (R)ex" in *Arethusa*, Vol 17 (1984), pp. 177-200.
- *—— (1986) *Reading Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- *Greimas, A J (1987) *On Meaning. Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory*. Pinter, London.
- *Green, Andre (1966) "Logic of Lacan's *objet (a)* and Freudian Theory: Convergences and Questions" in Smith, Joseph H and Kerrigan, William (1983) (Eds) *Interpreting Lacan. Psychiatry and the Humanities*, Volume 6, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- (1973) "The Double and the Absent" in Roland, Alan (Ed) (1978) *Psychoanalysis, Creativity, and Literature: A French-American Inquiry*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- *—— (1979) *The Tragic Effect: The Oedipus Complex in Tragedy*. Trans A Sheridan. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- *Grube, G M A (1941) "Ion" in Grube, G M A *The Drama of Euripides*. Methuen, London.
- *Hamilton, Richard (1985) "Euripidean Priests" in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol 89 (1985), pp. 53-73.
- Heath, M (1987) *The Poetics of Greek Tragedy*. Duckworth.

- Herrington, C J (1963) "Athena in Athenian Literature and Cult" in *Greece and Rome*, Vol 10, pp. 61-73.
- *Jefferson, Ann and Robey, David (1982) (Eds) *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*. 2nd Edition, Batsford, London 1986.
- *Jung, Carl G (1957) *Psychology of the Unconscious*. Dodd, Mead, New York.
- *Just, Roger (1989) *Women in Athenian Law and Life*. Routledge, London.
- Kerenyi, K (1951) *The Gods of the Greeks*. Translated by N Cameron. Grove Press, New York 1960.
- Kovacs, David (1979) "Four Passages from Euripides' Ion" in *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol 109 (1979), pp. 111-124.
- *Kristeva, Julia (1979) *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Blackwell, Oxford 1982.
- Kuhns, R F (1983) *Psychoanalytic Theory of Art*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- *Lacan, Jacques (1948) "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis" in *Ecrits: A Selection*. Routledge, London 1989, pp. 8-29.
- *—— (1949) "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the Eye as Revealed in the Psychoanalytic Experience" in *Ecrits: A Selection*. Routledge, London 1989, pp. 1-7.
- *—— (1957) "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud" in *Ecrits: A Selection*. Routledge, London 1989, pp. 146-78.
- *—— (1958) "The Signification of the Phallus" in *Ecrits: A Selection*. Routledge, London 1989, pp. 281-291.
- *—— (1959) "On a Question Preliminary to any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" in *Ecrits: A Selection*. Routledge, London 1989, pp. 179-225.
- *—— (1960) "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" in *Ecrits: A Selection*. Routledge, London 1989, pp. 292-324.
- *—— (1961) "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power" in *Ecrits: A Selection*. Routledge, London 1989, pp. 226-280.
- *—— (1972) "Seminar on the 'Purloined Letter'" in *Yale French Studies*, Vol 48 (1972), pp. 38-72.
- *—— (1973) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. Penguin Books, 1979.
- *—— (1977) "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet" in *Yale French Studies*, Vol 55/56, pp. 11-52.
- *Laplanche, J (1976) *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

- Laplanche, J and Leclaire, S (1972) "The Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Study" in *Yale French Studies*, Vol. 48, pp. 118-178.
- ***Laplanche, J and Pontalis J-B (1972)** Appendix to *Yale French Studies*, Vol. 48, pp. 179-202.
- *—— (1973) *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. Karnac Books and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, London 1988.
- ***LaRue, Jene (1963)** "Creusa's Monody: Ion 859-922" in *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol 94 (1963), pp. 126-136.
- Lavers, Annette (1971) "Some Aspects of Language in the Work of Jacques Lacan" in *Semiotica*, Vol 3(3), pp. 269-279.
- ***Lemaire, Anika (1970)** *Jacques Lacan*. Translated by David Macey, Routledge, London 1977.
- ***Loraux, Nicole (1984)** *The Children of Athena. Athenian Ideas about Citizenship & the Division between the Sexes*. Translated by Caroline Levine, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1993.
- MacCabe, Colin (1981) (Ed) *The Talking Cure: Essays in Psychoanalysis and Language*. Macmillan Press, London.
- MacCannell, Juliet Flower (1986) *Figuring Lacan: Criticism and the Cultural Unconscious*. Croom Helm, Kent.
- ***Mannoni, Octave (1971)** *Freud, the Theory of the Unconscious*. Pantheon Books, New York.
- Marcuse, Herbert (1956) *Eros And Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. Ark, London 1987.
- Mehlman, Jeffrey (1972) "The 'Floating Signifier': From Levi-Strauss to Lacan" in *Yale French Studies*, Vol 48, pp. 10-37.
- Melville, Stephen (1987) "Psychoanalysis and the Place of Jouissance" in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 13 (Winter 1987), pp. 349-370.
- ***Miller, Jacques-Alain (1975)** (Ed) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988.
- *—— (1978) (Ed) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-55*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988.
- *—— (1981) (Ed) *The Psychoses: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book III 1955-1956*. Routledge, London 1993.

- (1986) (Ed) *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: 1959-1960 The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII*. Routledge, London 1992.
- Mitchell, Juliet and Rose, Jacqueline (1982) (Ed) *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan & the Ecole Freudienne*. Macmillan Press, London.
- ***Moudatsakis, T (1986)** *Η Διαλεκτική της Θεατρικής Σύνταξης*. Nefeli, Athens.
- Orlando, Francesco (1978) *Towards a Freudian Theory of Literature, with an Analysis of Racine's 'Phedre'*. Translated by Charmaine Lee. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- ***Owen, A S (1939)** (Ed) *Euripides Ion*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- ***Padel, Ruth (1992)** *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
- Parker, Robert (1983) *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in early Greek Religion*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- ***Patterson, Cynthia (1985)** “‘Not Worth the Rearing’: The Causes of Infant Exposure in Ancient Greece” in *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol 115 (1985), pp. 103-123.
- Peradotto, John (1977) “Oedipus and Erichthonius: Some Observations on Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Order” in *Arethusa*, Vol 10 (1977), pp. 85-101.
- Podlecki, A J (1970) “The Basic Seriousness of Euripides’ Helen” in *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol 101, pp. 401-18.
- Poole, William (1990) “Male Homosexuality in Euripides” in Powell, Anton (1990) *Euripides, Women and Sexuality*. Routledge, London, pp. 108-150.
- Pucci, Pietro (1977) “Euripides: The Monument and the Sacrifice” in *Arethusa*, Vol 10 (1977), pp. 165-195.
- Rabinowitz, Nancy Sorkin (1986) “Aphrodite and the Audience: Engendering the Reader” in *Arethusa*, Vol 19.2 (1986), pp. 171-85.
- *—— (1993) *Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the Traffic in Women*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- ***Ragland, Ellie (1995)** *Essays on the Pleasures of Death: From Freud to Lacan*. Routledge, New York.
- Ragland-Sullivan, Ellie and Bracher, Mark (1991) (Eds) *Lacan and the Subject of Language*. Routledge, New York.
- ***Rapaport, Herman (1994)** *Between the Sign & the Gaze*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- ***Rose, J (1975)** “The Imaginary” in MacCabe, Colin (1981) (Ed) *The Talking Cure: Essays in Psychoanalysis and Language*. Macmillan Press, London.

- ***Rosivach, Vincent J (1977)** "Earthborns and Olympians: The Parodos of the Ion" in *Classical Quarterly*, Vol 27 (1977), pp. 284-294.
- ***Schleifer, Ronald (1987)** *A J Greimas and the Nature of Meaning: Linguistics, Semiotics and Discourse Theory*. Croom Helm, Kent.
- Segal, Erich (1968) "Euripides: Poet of Paradox" in Segal, Erich (Ed) *A Collection of Critical Essays*. Prentice Hall, 1968, pp. 1-12.
- ***Segal, Charles (1968)** "Ancient Texts and Modern Criticism: Some Recent Trends in Classical Literary Studies" in *Arethusa*, Vol 1 (1968), pp. 1-25.
- *—— (1988) "Euripides' *Alcestis*: How to Die a Normal Death in Greek Tragedy" in Goodwin, Sarah Webster and Bronfen, Elisabeth (1993) (Eds) *Death and Representation*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Shelton, Jo-Ann (1979) "Structural Unity and the Meaning of Euripides' Herakles" in *Eranos*, Vol 77 (1979), pp.101-110.
- ***Sibony, Daniel (1977)** "Hamlet: A Writing-Effect" in *Yale French Studies*, Vol 55/56, pp. 53-93.
- ***Sinos, Dale S (1982)** "Characterization in the Ion: Apollo and the Dynamism of the Plot" in *Eranos*, Vol 80 (1982), pp. 129-134.
- Skura, Anne Meredith (1981) *The Literary Use of the Psychoanalytic Process*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- ***Slater, Philip E (1968)** *The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1992.
- *—— (1974) "The Greek Family in History and Myth" in *Arethusa*, Vol 7 (1974), pp. 9-44.
- Smith, Joseph H and Kerrigan, William (1983) (Eds) *Interpreting Lacan. Psychiatry and the Humanities*, Volume 6, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Stokes, A (1958) *Greek Culture and the Ego: A Psychoanalytic Survey of an Aspect of Greek Civilisation and Art*. Tavistock.
- Sutton, Dana Ferrin (1971) "The Relation between Tragedies and Fourth Place Plays in three Instances" in *Arethusa*, Vol 4 (1971), pp. 55-72.
- Taplin, O (1978) *Greek Tragedy in Action*. Methuen, London.
- ***Vellacott, Philip (1954)** (Trans) *Euripides. The Bacchae and Other Plays: Ion, The Women of Troy, Helen, The Bacchae*. Penguin Books.
- ***Vernant, Jean-Pierre (1967)** "Oedipus without the Complex" in Vernant, Jean-Pierre and Vidal-Naquet, Pierre (1988) *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*. Translated by Janet Lloyd, Zone Books, New York 1990, pp. 85-111.

- *—— (1972) "Intimations of the Will in Greek Tragedy" in Vernant, Jean-Pierre and Vidal-Naquet, Pierre (1988) *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*. Translated by Janet Lloyd, Zone Books, New York 1990, pp. 49-84.
- *—— (1981) "A General Theory of Sacrifice and the Slaying of the Victims in the Greek Thusia" in Vernant, Jean-Pierre (1991) *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*. Edited by Froma I Zeitlin, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, pp. 290-302.
- *Walsh, George B (1978) "The Rhetoric of Birthright and Race in Euripides' Ion" in *Hermes*, Vol 106(2), pp. 301-315.
- *Wassermann, Felix Martin (1940) "Divine Violence and Providence in Euripides' Ion" in *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol 71 (1940), pp. 587-604.
- *Way, Arthur S (1958) (Trans) *Euripides in four Volumes. IV: Ion, Hippolytus, Medea, Alceste*. William Heinemann, London.
- *Weber, S (1991) *Return to Freud: Lacan's Dislocation of Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- *Wilden, Anthony (1968) *Jacques Lacan: Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1981.
- *Winnington-Ingram, R P (1969) "Euripides: Poietes Sophos" in *Arethusa*, Vol 2 (1969), pp. 127-142.
- *Wolff, Christian (1965) "The Design and Myth in Euripides' Ion" in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol 69 (1965), pp. 169-194.
- *Wright, Elizabeth (1984) *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice*. Methuen, London.
- Zeitlin, Froma I (1978) "The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the Oresteia" in *Arethusa*, Vol 11 (1978), pp. 149-183.
- *Zizek, Slavoj (1989) *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Verso, London.
- *—— (1991) *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Lacan through Popular Culture*. MIT Press, Cambridge Mass.
- *—— (1992) *Enjoy your Symptom! : Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out*. Routledge, New York.